TEACHER PERSPECTIVES ON HOW SOCIAL MEDIA IS CHANGING TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

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ABSTRACT

The prevalence of social media today has made it a ubiquitous presence in many people's lives. Different social media tools have also permeated education, and teachers today have to decide whether these tools would be useful for their teaching, figure out how to best utilize them, and consider how they affect different aspects of their relationships and roles as educators. The purpose of this multiple methods study was to examine teacher perspectives on how social media is affecting the teacher-student relationship, as well as their roles as teachers. Data were collected through qualitative interviews, quantitative surveys, and a card sort task conducted during interviews. Purposive sampling was used to select 10 interview participants who used social media with their students. The card sort examined teachers' perceived 'digital native' trait differences between them and their students. Surveys were also randomly distributed to four schools, garnering 63 survey responses. The findings revealed that teachers perceived social media impacted the teacher-student relationship in both academic and interpersonal aspects, as well as affecting teacher-student interactions, classroom dynamics, and student behavioral and learning outcomes. This study posits the systemic nature of the teacher-student relationship, and that what affects one aspect of that relationship will affect the others in both academic and interpersonal ways. Overall, the study concluded that with further research, a more complete picture of the teacher-student relationship could be gained and used to increase student motivation, engagement, and possible achievement.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

There are a number of different roles that educators take in a classroom. They are the sages on the stage, the guides on the side, the fonts of knowledge, the facilitators, and the gatekeepers. But what of the role of 'friend'? Such a term is especially ensconced in the digital social media world of today, and some educators might balk at the idea of being 'friends' with students. After all, how exactly does a teacher become a friend to students, and to what extent is that relationship realized in terms of platonic friendship and cordial interaction? Moreover, in today's digitally-entrenched and social media-suffused world, how has that friendship been affected and influenced? While there is a growing body of literature that recognizes the importance of the teacher-student relationship in learning (Banfield, Richmond, & McCroskey, 2006; Bolkan & Goodboy, 2009; Frisby & Martin, 2010; Frymier & Houser, 2000; Gehlbach, Brinkworth, & Harris, 2012; Jones, 2008, p. 200; Pogue & Ahyun, 2006), there exists the question of how social media has impacted that relationship and the role of teachers in the classroom and their students' lives. In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in the online interactions of teachers and students, and recent evidence suggests that social media may have positive effects in education (Botty, Mohd Taha, Shahrill, & Mahadi, 2015; K. A. Johnson, 2011; Komarraju, Musulkin, & Bhattacharya, 2010; Mazer, Murphy, & Simonds, 2009; McArthur & Bostedo-Conway, 2012; Sakiz, Pape, & Hoy, 2012; Veldman, van Tartwijk, Brekelmans, & Wubbels, 2013). On the other hand, both teachers and students are still concerned with the relevance and appropriateness of increased social media interaction with one another (Bongartz et al., 2011; Cain, Scott, Tiemeier, Akers, & Metzger, 2013; Helvie-Mason, 2011; Karl & Peluchette, 2011; Seidel, 2009; Teclehaimanot & Hickman, 2011). These issues take on different meanings depending on the socio-cultural factors that govern them; teachers and students in one culture and country might have vastly different relationships than those in another. However, regardless of location, one thing seems certain — social media networks have emerged as powerful platforms for interaction, communication, and building relationships, and it would be interesting to consider these issues against the backdrop of differences in cultural norms and expectations.

Statement of the Problem

The way relationships form, adapt, and evolve today almost inevitably includes an online component in the form of ubiquitous social media. Now friendships can be made and maintained regardless of geographic location or time zone. Moreover, one of the myriad external forces which permeate and impact the way relationships are navigated is culture; different societies and nations have different cultural norms and expectations, and relational dynamics will naturally vary from place to place. And what of those within an educational context? Given the effect of social media on relationships, coupled with the added impact of the cultural milieu, it would not be surprising if the relationships and interactions between educators and students were also affected in some way.

In addition, many major studies concerning social media in education were conducted in Western contexts, usually in the US and UK. Hsu, Hung, and Ching (2013) found that only two of the top ten countries for publication in the field were in Asia, namely Taiwan (in third place) and Singapore (in ninth place). While there has been an increase in the amount and quality of research conducted in the Asia-Pacific region, the theoretical and conceptual frameworks used to support these studies still find their basis in Western research philosophies (Tan, Chai, Tsai, Lim, & Chou, 2012). How applicable are the findings and principles in these studies in a Southeast Asian context? There are complex cultural disparities between people and nations that affect multiple aspects of our lives, including social and relational structures within education, such as the relationship between teacher and student. Taking these cultural idiosyncrasies into account would be an important step in research, particularly in the Southeast Asian context of this study.

Purpose

The purpose of this multiple methods research study was to examine Bruneian teacher perspectives on how social media was affecting their relationships with students, as well as their roles as teachers, against the cultural backdrop of Brunei Darussalam.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were:

1. **How do Bruneian teachers perceive social media is changing their relationships with students?** This question involved teacher perspectives on the effects that social media

interactions had on their relationships with their students both inside and outside the classroom, how those changes had come about, and ultimately what this meant for classroom dynamics and learning in general.

2. **How do Bruneian teachers perceive social media is affecting their roles as teachers?** This question sought to examine teacher reflections on their roles of teachers and what effect their social media relationships with students had on those roles, whether inside or outside the classroom.

Significance of the Study

Much research has been conducted in considering the importance of the teacher-student relationship (Banfield et al., 2006; Bolkan & Goodboy, 2009; Frisby & Martin, 2010; Frymier & Houser, 2000; Gehlbach et al., 2012; Jones, 2008; Pogue & Ahyun, 2006). And given the emergence of social media as a ubiquitous phenomenon, the educator is faced with the question of how to use this tool that both they and their students are fast becoming accustomed to as a nigh inevitable part of their everyday lives. In addition, what effect does that inevitability have on their roles and interactions with one another?

Gaining a deeper perspective into how the teacher-student relationship is affected by social media betters enable educators to appreciate relational dynamics both inside and outside their classrooms, in real life as well as online. It also allows educators to reflect on their own roles as educators and how those roles could be evolving. An increased understanding of these dynamics and roles also potentially leads to more practical implications, such as how to improve both teacher and student engagement, motivation, and achievement in various academic and extra-curricular situations, as well as potential informing policy with regard to how much interaction would be considered safe and beneficial for both educators and students.

Moreover, given the cultural variation and diversity between peoples and nations, studies conducted in a Western context and based on Western philosophies may not necessarily be fully applicable or relevant to a more Asian context. As such, even a simple acknowledgement or discussion of these cultural differences in the framework of a study would go some way in grounding that study within the appropriate context, especially a Southeast Asian context such as Brunei that has not seen much research in the area in which this study is focused.

Conceptual Framework

This study utilized a framework based on Social Penetration Theory (Altman & Taylor, 1973), which looks at how closeness in relationships develops and how relationships progress from superficial to intimate through interpersonal communication and self-disclosure (Figure 1).

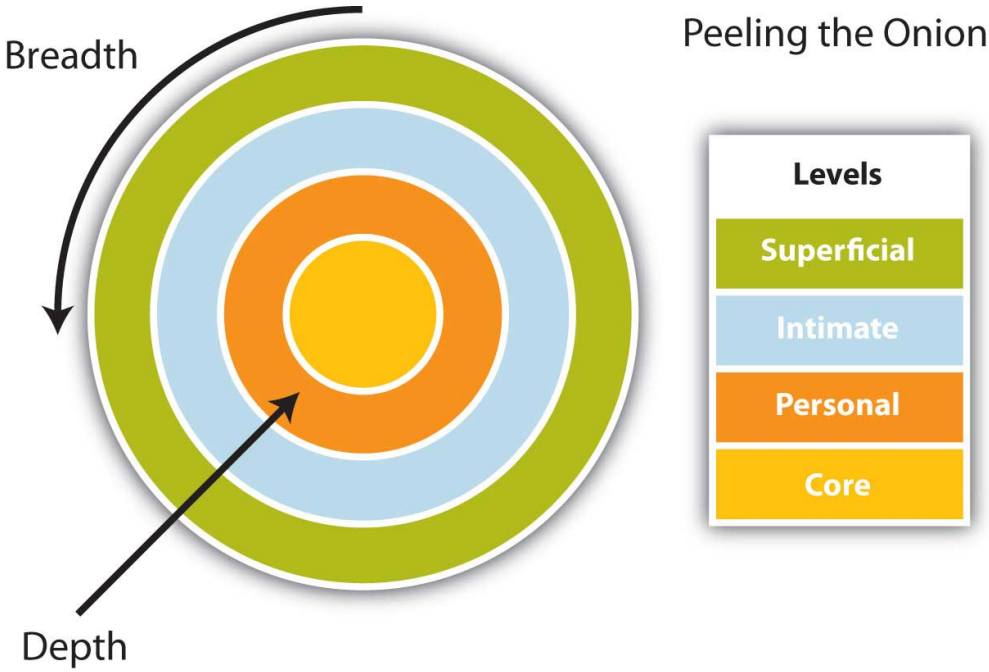

Figure 1. Social Penetration Theory (McLean, 2006, p. 535).

As individuals interact and disclose information about themselves over time, they gradually become more vulnerable and offer more personal details about themselves, which in turn deepens the connection and relationship between them. While the complexity of relationships offers myriad aspects to consider within the framework of SPT, this study focused on the self-disclosure aspect and its effects on the progress and relational turning points (Docan-Morgan, 2011; Docan-Morgan & Manusov, 2009) in the teacher-student relationship. This allowed an in-depth qualitative look into the deeper levels of meaning-making in a teacher-student relationship, particularly from the teacher's point of view.

Summary of Methodology

This study examined teacher perspectives on how social media affected their relationships with students, as well as their own roles as teachers. This study aimed to describe, understand,

and interpret these teacher perspectives and the meanings they attribute to their own roles and their relationships with their students. Given this aim of detailed understanding and greater exploration of the phenomenon, the qualitative method was used (Creswell, 2012). While all qualitative research is characterized by the aim of understanding how participants make sense of their experiences, more specific qualitative studies have an additional layer or focus, such as the building of a theory in grounded theory, or the examination of cultural dimensions in ethnography (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Given the lack of any such specific foci, this study used the basic qualitative interpretive research approach which yielded a general rich description of the topic (Merriam, 2002) in the form of teachers' thoughts and perceptions. This type of study is also well-suited for building an understanding of a topic that is not well understood from previous research, and which represents an arena of rapid social change.

Participants and Site

The study involved ten teachers who taught at multiple levels of education in institutions in Brunei Darussalam, and who utilized social media to interact with their students inside and outside the classroom. Purposive sampling was used to select participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This type of sampling allowed the selection of information-rich cases based on certain criteria and from whom the most information and insight could be gained, but who were also easily accessible in terms of availability and who could provide insight into other potential cases to approach for participation in this study.

At the schools in which the ten teachers worked, a larger sample of teachers was surveyed to gain demographic, background, and social media usage information. This provided a context in which to ground the data garnered from teacher interviews.

Definition of Key Terms

There were a number of terms used within this study that were assumed as common knowledge by the researcher and others in this field, but were nevertheless defined as follows:

Social media. Any of a number of websites, programs, and applications that enable users to create and share content and media or to participate in social networking. This includes sites and applications that are conventionally understood as social media such as Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, and Twitter. However, the definition as used in this study also included applications and programs that did not completely fall under the traditional 'social media' label but still

facilitated communicative and social functions, such as WhatsApp, Skype, and Facebook Messenger.

Friend. In this study, the term ‘friend’ had different meanings depending on the context in which it is used. One such meaning was the more modern and straightforward ‘Facebook’ definition, which is ‘a contact on a social media site’. Another meaning was the more traditional definition of ‘someone with whom you share a mutual affection or bond’. Given this study’s aim to delve into participant perceptions of social media effects, different definitions of ‘friend’ were explored and discussed. Both meanings were considered separately, simultaneously, or in juxtaposition given the circumstances and participants’ perspectives.

Brunei Darussalam. A sovereign nation on the northern coast of the island of Borneo in Southeast Asia. Usually referred to simply as ‘Brunei’, it is a staunch Muslim sultanate with a national philosophy that promotes three aspects: Malay language and culture, the official religion of Islam, and the ruling monarchy. While Malay is the official language, English is a widely spoken second language and is the main medium of instruction in education.

Summary

The main objective of this study was to consider teacher perspectives on the impact of social media interactions on the development of the teacher-student relationship and the role of the educator. Future studies could address the significance of these impacts and how relational dynamics are being affected or changed, as well as how to best harness these dynamics to better increase teacher and student motivations, engagement, and possibly even achievement.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media is seemingly everywhere today and statistics show that it is here to stay; 74% of online adults in the United States use a social network site of some kind (Pew Research Center, 2014), with 42% using multiple (Duggan & Smith, 2013). Teens have also jumped on the bandwagon; they are sharing more information about themselves than they did in the past—including photos and videos—and many manage their online profiles carefully (Madden et al., 2013).

This trend has also entered education. Almost 40% of the world's population use social media on a regular basis and it has permeated almost every sector of education with faculty, administrators, and students all using social media in their professional and personal lives (Johnson, Becker, Estrada, & Freeman, 2014b). How has this proliferation of social networking—and its inherent online social norms—affected the dynamics of teacher-student relationships? In order to provide context for this study, the rest of this chapter will consider a number of topics: social media from an educational perspective; educational policy and the teacher-student relationship; and cultural disparities between East and West with a summarized look at Brunei.

Social Media from an Educational Perspective

In addition to teaching and administrative duties, many teachers today are often expected to have a grasp of educational technology that allows them to deliver content and support learners in new and modern ways (Johnson, Adams Becker, Estrada, & Freeman, 2014a), and this might often include using a social media tool to better connect with students. As such, it seems the primary role of the teacher is evolving into less a fount of knowledge to more a guide for how to find and navigate that knowledge and make discerning choices, particularly in online environments (Callaghan & Bower, 2012). However, this evolution does not lessen the importance of the teacher-student relationship to learning (Banfield et al., 2006; Bolkan & Goodboy, 2009; Frisby & Martin, 2010; Frymier & Houser, 2000; Gehlbach et al., 2012; Jones, 2008; Pogue & Ahyun, 2006).

Impacts of Social Media on Teacher-Student Relationships

Both a teacher's professional and personal life have an impact on his or her students (Uitto, 2012). Thus it might behoove teachers to carefully curate how their personal and professional lives intertwine. This is all the more important, given the current existence of social networks as a sort of digital commons (Schwartz, 2009) where teachers and students can—and often do—co-exist and sometimes connect. This lead to new challenges for educators as they re-examine the boundaries between the personal and professional and how things are changing. Different relationships have different dynamics depending on those involved; teachers interact differently with their friends, parents, and students, and this is no different within online communities and networks (Teclehaimanot & Hickman, 2011; Veletsianos, Kimmons, & French, 2013). Moreover, some social networks have specific ways of framing relationships, which might either be inadequate or even inappropriate for an academic context. For example, what is a Facebook 'friend'? Would it be appropriate for teachers to be their students' friend? No doubt some students would take to the idea more than others, and some might even blur the line between educator and peer, depending on how they view the label of 'friend' offline and online.

In addition, given how a social network lends itself to "selective self-presentation" where an individual can curate their online facade or persona (Park, Jin, & Annie Jin, 2011), communication through a social network can be very different from face-to-face interactions. This can even vary between social networks; Facebook, for example, discourages pseudonyms and typically requires users to provide their real names, whereas Twitter has no such requirement and its users' accounts and information can be as real or fabricated as they desire. Given this possible variability from student to student and even network to network, social media interactions can often be a digital minefield and educators need to tread carefully. Furthermore, when educators enter what students feel is *their* online social environment, tensions may arise, particularly when there are discrepancies between the expectations that students have about the educator and the perceived persona of that educator they see portrayed online. How these expectations are violated may influence the way educators are viewed, and even affect their credibility or authority in the classroom (Helvie-Mason, 2011). One very cautious strategy to prevent this would be to outright ignore or reject student social media connections. For example, in a study by Cain, Scott, Tiemeier, Akers, and Metzger (2013), faculty in professional pharmacy programs were quite conservative when deciding whether to 'friend' students on Facebook. They

felt that not respecting the instructor-student boundary would lead to a decrease in professionalism, and as such it was safer to err on the side of caution and not initiate any friend requests, or to reject them outright, at least until their students graduated. Similarly, many students also choose to keep their academic and social lives separate, and feel that becoming 'friends' with their teachers on Facebook would not be appropriate for the teacher-student relationship (Bongartz et al., 2011; Helvie-Mason, 2011; Karl & Peluchette, 2011; Seidel, 2009; Teclehaimanot & Hickman, 2011). Indeed, some schools and districts have removed that choice entirely by implementing policies restricting social media contact between teachers and students, or blocking social media sites at school altogether (Matthews, 2012; Varlas, 2011).

On the other hand, communication outside of the classroom can increase teacher credibility with students (Mazer et al., 2009), improve student trust, confidence, motivation, engagement, and learning (Botty et al., 2015; Jaasma & Koper, 1999; Junco, Heiberger, & Loken, 2011; Junco, Elavsky, & Heiberger, 2013; Komarraju et al., 2010; Mazer, Murphy, & Simonds, 2007; Sakiz et al., 2012), encourage intimacy and shared control between instructor and student (Dobransky & Frymier, 2004), and even affect teachers' own job satisfaction, motivation, wellbeing, and self-efficacy (Docan-Morgan, 2011; Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011; Veldman et al., 2013). The prevalence and possibilities of social media today have no doubt taken this out-of-class communication to new heights, and the use of social media in classroom settings has seen some positive effects, particularly with students who have a penchant for social media to begin with. In a study by McArthur and Bostedo-Conway (2012), university students who interacted with their instructors on Twitter tended to view them in a positive light. Content relevance and teacher immediacy were both positively correlated with student perceptions about the appropriateness of Twitter as an interaction tool with their instructors. That is, the students who used Twitter regularly were more likely to feel close to their instructor and find their tweets relevant. Similarly, Johnson (2011) examined college student reactions to their instructors' tweets on Twitter and found that instructors' disclosure of personal information on social media actually increased their credibility with students, particularly those students who had a positive reaction toward social media or used it regularly themselves. As such, it seems that social media can be an important tool in the positive student perception of instructors and affect the growth of the teacher-student relationship, especially with regard to online self-disclosure.

Teacher Self-Disclosure on Social Media

Another significant factor seems to be the amount and type of self-disclosure by the instructor. Students tend to value self-disclosure that is intentional, positive, and honest, particularly if it is relevant to the course and content at hand (Lannutti & Strauman, 2006; Zhai, 2012). An instructor's disclosure online also needs to be consistent with their teaching style in the classroom; teachers who seem strict in the classroom but exhibit a relaxed demeanor online might have negative effects on students (Mazer et al., 2009). It is crucial to note, however, that just because an instructor practices self-disclosure on a social network, it does not necessarily lead to a better relationship with their students (Park et al., 2011). Hence it is likely that while social media does allow instructors to better connect with their students, the content, appropriateness, and relevance of those connections also play an important part.

Additionally, there is a marked difference between academic engagement and social engagement. If implemented and utilized well in an academic setting, social media sites like Facebook can help build and maintain communities of practice that impact students' learning experiences (Duncan & Barczyk, 2013). However, without proper usage, these sites are more likely to be a distraction than an aid, as they tend to lend themselves more to social interaction and connection rather than student engagement in an academic context (Wise, Skues, & Williams, 2011). Thus, instructors who attempt to build better connections with students through online self-disclosure need to be aware of the realities of what they are trying to achieve, and the limitations of the social media tools they opt to implement.

Who is a Digital Native?

The average learner today is said to be a "digital native", a product of a life immersed in and surrounded by information and communication technology, and "computer games, email, the Internet, cell phones and instant messaging are integral parts of their lives." (Prensky, 2001, p.1). Prensky stated that digital natives and immigrants learn differently, and that learners' brains are physically different from those of their educators'. He further asserts "our Digital Immigrant instructors, who speak an outdated language (that of the pre-digital age), are struggling to teach a population that speaks an entirely new language." (p. 2). These statements were posited at the beginning of the 21st century, and many educators in academia today would seemingly fall under the 'digital native' label, as they teach alongside their 'digital immigrant' colleagues. Thus, these

concepts of digital natives and immigrants in an educational environment inevitably bring up certain questions. For one, if many educators are digital natives themselves, does that mean they find many similarities with their students? And if so, does this have an impact on their teaching? Are they as comfortable with technology and connecting on social media as their students? Also, are there any significant differences in technology usage and teaching between them and their 'digital immigrant' colleagues?

Educational Policy and the Teacher-Student Relationship

In the U.S., educational institutions that desire to use social media and networks as part of their pedagogy need to be aware of a number of federal laws that seek to protect children (Davis, 2010; Varlas, 2011). One such law is the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), which seeks to ensure that any personal information from children under 13 stays safe online. Under COPPA, any operator of a web site must include relevant information in their privacy policy, seek parental consent for children's usage or participation, and be aware of responsibilities when it comes to children's online safety and privacy (Federal Trade Commission, 2016). Another law is the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), which addresses "concerns about children's access to obscene or harmful content over the Internet" and "imposes certain types of requirements on any school or library that receives [government] discounts for Internet access or internal connections" (Federal Communications Commission, 2015). In line with these laws, some schools, districts, and states have put in place policies that moderate, restrict, or prohibit teacher-student contact on social media, with some even going so far as to block those sites and networks entirely (Matthews, 2012; Schachter, 2013; Varlas, 2011). This caution seems prudent; as Seidel (2009) puts it, the issue of connecting and communicating with one's students online "becomes one of self protection for the teacher. How does one satisfy an interested party that the contact is legitimate and appropriate?" (p. 62). Ultimately, these laws and policies protect both teachers and students from the negative repercussions of any inappropriate conduct or contact, whether real or perceived.

It is also important to consider how effective laws like COPPA and CIPA really are, and whether they would translate across cultures. Yan (2009) suggests that laws like CIPA are not infallible and often might not even work, stating that student curiosity might override better judgment when it comes to accessing forbidden material. Schools are not the only conduit

through which students can access material since students can be exposed to 'offensive' material through many forms of mass media at multiple locations. Moreover, U.S. law promotes freedom of speech under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, and laws like COPPA and CIPA are subject to the laws governing this freedom. Brunei does not have similar freedoms, and the implementation of laws such as COPPA and CIPA would have to be considered and adapted very carefully within the framework of existing statutes and citizens' — as well as teachers' and students' — rights and responsibilities.

Existing child protection laws in Brunei are either nascent or lack proper execution. In 2006, although Brunei established the Children and Young Persons Order (Government of Brunei Darussalam, 2006) to provide for the protection and care of children, implementations of programs stemming from the law have been slow and inconsistent (Thien, 2016), and most provisions under that law do not specify any particular guidelines or regulations pertaining to online behavior and interaction. Recently, however, there have been some advancements — the Child Online Protection Framework for Brunei Darussalam was proposed in 2012 and developed over the following few years (Authority of Info-communications Technology Industry of Brunei Darussalam, 2014). One outcome of this was seen in early 2015, when a number of cyber security awareness seminars and campaigns were held for teachers and students to provide insights on cybercrime and the potential dangers associated with social media (Kon, 2015). These steps are promising, but it remains to be seen how they will influence educational policy with regard to social media and the teacher-student relationship.

Cultural Disparities

A cursory glance at current research in learning sciences would suggest that much of it is conducted in Western contexts. Many of the major studies concerning social media in education were conducted in the US, and in some cases, in the UK. In a study examining trends in educational technology research, Hsu, Hung, and Ching (2013) found that only two of the top ten countries for publication in the field were in Asia, namely Taiwan (in third place) and Singapore (in ninth place). Moreover, these two nations are fully developed nations with specific policies in place that affect research direction (Hoofd, 2010; Hsu et al., 2013). In addition, while there has been an increase in the amount and quality of research conducted in the Asia-Pacific region, the theoretical and conceptual frameworks used to support these studies still find their basis in

Western research philosophies (Tan, Chai, Tsai, Lim, and Chou, 2012). This begs the question of how well these studies and principles adapt to different contexts in other nations. Moreover, how applicable are the findings and principles in these studies in a Southeast Asian context? Considering different cultural lenses and regional factors might improve the way theories and research are conducted and applied at the international level (Tsai & Hwang, 2013).

There are complex cultural disparities between people and nations, and these divisions permeate, affect, and connect multiple aspects of our lives, including the types, modes, and methods of education as well as our social and relational structures, such as the relationship between teacher and student. Leung, Graf, and Lopez-Real (2006) roughly identify two cultural traditions, namely Chinese/Confucian in the East, and Greek/Latin/Christian in the West. While these traditions by no means cover all major cultures, they suffice to loosely frame the current comparison between the 'Western' views in the US and UK, and the 'Eastern' in Asia, and more specifically, in Brunei Darussalam. Although cultural divisions are not so easily defined — indeed, the word 'culture' itself often defies simple definition — they can be more useful than geographical or political boundaries when considering differences between educational or relational philosophies and methods (Leung, Graf, & Lopez-Real, 2006).

Educational Culture

Bowers (1987) asserted "the classroom is a microcosm which … reflects in fundamental social terms the world that lies outside the window" (p. 8-9). The classroom is part of a larger institution, which is itself part of a larger educational environment influenced by parents, employers, communities, and the nation as a whole (Holliday, 1994). Thus, there will inevitably be differences in classroom dynamics and teaching styles between Western and Eastern cultural traditions. One of these differences is in the 'centeredness' of the classroom, that is, whether it is teacher-centered or student-centered. These two types bring with them varying teaching roles and styles, methods, dynamics, and foci. The Western educational landscape has seen a shift to being more student-centered, and is often more focused on active learning and understanding, the enjoyment of learning through engagement, and the application of content to real world usage (Filatova, 2015; Jackson, 2012; Jordan et al., 2014). Methods include flipped classrooms, independent projects, group activities, and increased peer interaction (Filatova, 2015). Teachers' roles have consequently also moved toward that of facilitation rather than just information transfer, that is, from 'sage on the stage' to 'guide on the side' (King, 1993). Eastern education,

on the other hand, has been very much teacher-centered (Kim, 2005). Often conducted in a whole class setting in large classrooms, teaching has tended to be instructor-dominated, content-oriented, and examination-driven, with a lack of student involvement or group activity and a focus on memorization and rote learning (Leung, 2001; Leung et al., 2006).

Relational Culture

Connected to educational culture is relational culture and the way people — in this case, teachers and students — interact with one another and how culture affects and is affected by those interactions. According to the Hofstede (2011) model, there are six dimensions of national cultures, namely power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, long term versus short term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint. Each dimension exists as a scale, and different relational characteristics can occur depending on where cultures place on each scale. For example, people from a culture high in individualism would tend to rely more on themselves, focus on self-actualization, value personal opinion, and encourage the speaking of one's mind. This would lead to an educational and relational culture that would be markedly different when compared to a more collectivist culture that tends to prioritize group harmony and deference to authority figures.

Bruneian Cultural Characteristics

Brunei Darussalam — or simply, Brunei — is a staunch Malay-Muslim sultanate where there is no separation of church and state. In other words, Islam permeates and influences nearly all areas and levels of life and culture. Malay-Islamic values are enshrined in the national philosophy and ideology known as '*Melayu Islam Beraja'* (MIB), which translates to 'Malay Islamic Monarchy' (Chuchu & Saxena, 2009; Ooi, 2004). Malay language and culture, Islamic principles and beliefs, and the dynastic absolute monarchy are all mutually supported and propagated, leading to a value system that governs institutional norms and behavior. This value system also pervades and influences the education system, which in turn further reinforces those values. Some examples: MIB courses are mandatory from primary to tertiary education (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2013; Oxford Business Group, 2013); students are required to adhere to Islamic dress codes which encourage modesty; and all students — Muslim and non-Muslim — attend mandatory Islamic Religious Knowledge classes regularly (Bakar, 2014; Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2013).

In considering educational culture, although Brunei is a Malay-majority Islamic nation and does not necessarily fall neatly into the Chinese/Confucian tradition, what is similarly inherent in its national philosophy of MIB is the respect and deference given to authority and those in power, that is, the 'Monarchy' part of the philosophy that calls for respect for the sultan and the government (Ooi, 2004). Consequently, its educational practices seem to mirror the aforementioned teacher-centered characteristics, particularly those of being teacher-dominated, often lacking group activities and peer interaction, and being examination-oriented (Mundia, 2010; Salam & Shahrill, 2014; Shahrill & Clarke, 2014).

In terms of relational culture, while Hofstede (2011) examined many countries to develop his model, Brunei was not included, so information is scarce on how it fares in those cultural dimensions. One rare source is Blunt (1988) who applied Hofstede's model and examined organizational development at a (then) new and rapidly developing educational institution in Brunei. His cultural profile focused on three of the six dimensions and classified Brunei as having the following features: high power distance, high uncertainty avoidance, and low individualism (collectivist). Blunt's profile of Brunei, along with Hofstede's definitions, are outlined as follows:

High power distance. Power distance is the extent to which the less powerful members of a society or organization accept the potentially unequal distribution of power and positions of those in authority. Brunei's high power distance is first and foremost reflected in the MIB philosophy, particularly in the submission to and respect of the monarchy. Thus, in some ways Bruneians are inherently used to inequality of power given their belief in the divine political authority of the sultan.

High uncertainty avoidance. Certainty avoidance deals with how comfortable the members of a society feel in ambiguous or uncertain situations. As a culture that tends to avoid uncertainty, Brunei has put into place strict laws and governance, reinforced by the conservative religious and philosophical values of Islam and MIB.

Low individualism. The MIB philosophy promotes cultural solidarity, societal harmony, and respect of authority. Duty to one's religion, family, sultan, community, and nation are emphasized.

These dimensions of high power distance, high uncertainty avoidance, and low individualism manifest themselves in different ways. For example, there is a rigid hierarchy in

schools and institutions, where the top position (usually the principal) wields the most power. According to Postiglione and Tan (2007), teachers in Brunei have "little autonomy and professional freedom. They cannot with impunity criticize the education system, education policies, or curriculum. The teacher is not a change agent" (p.31) and is usually expected to follow policies and procedures. This leads to a more teacher-centered educational culture that focuses on learning as "the transmission of standardized accepted sanitized knowledge" (p. 27). Consequently, for both teacher and students there is often less room for creativity, unusual ideas, and intellectual curiosity outside established curricula, a situation compounded by the emphasis on the importance of examinations and results. Another possible manifestation could be the lack of student interaction; if a culture of respect, deference, and adherence to rules is promoted at the national level and ingrained at the educational level, it becomes less surprising that many students choose to stay quiet and listen to the 'sage' speak at the front of the classroom. It seems that many teacher-student relationships exist just to promote educational gain; any non-academic relational improvements are often just unexpected corollaries. Thus if classroom culture tends to focus more on content than relationships between teacher and student, would interaction outside of the classroom context serve to bridge any perceived gaps?

Ultimately, given the cultural disparities between Brunei and Western nations, educational and relational culture would seem to vary significantly. It would be interesting to see how the use of social media has affected the teacher-student relationship in Brunei, particularly in regard to how it may affect where Brunei falls on the spectrums of Hofstede's dimensions.

Educational Technology Research in Brunei

Recent research in the field of educational technology in Brunei has focused primarily on the usage and implementation of technology, such as the adoption of information and communication technologies (ICT) in Bruneian primary schools (Salleh & Laxman, 2014) and the effectiveness of ICT in Bruneian science lessons (Yong & Salleh, 2015).

However, while there does not seem to be much research conducted on possible effects of social media on teacher-student relationships, there have been a number of studies that might be pertinent to this current study. Noor, Sura, and Hamidon (2008) examined student usage of a 'learning website' to access resources and materials as part of their online learning process and found that students mostly accessed the website at home and only sought relevant information

according to their learning needs at any given time. Munohsamy and Chandran (2014) looked at student Internet usage and found that students in Brunei had positive attitudes toward online learning. This added to a study by Seyal and Abd Rahman (2003) who posited student usage of online technologies was mainly contingent on how useful they felt those technologies were. Ganske and Hamidon (2006) examined teacher usage of the Internet and found that the vast majority of them used the Internet at home for various tasks, and younger teachers in particular were more 'plugged in' to technology than their older compatriots. In terms of their educational usage, Ali, Salleh, and Shahrill (2015) found that while teachers' technology integration in their teaching was at the developing stages, their students felt that the digital technology that was used did have positive impacts on their motivation and learning.

While these studies did not directly address the teacher-student relationship or social media usage, taken together they do paint a picture of the milieu of usage surrounding digital and online technologies in Brunei, as well as how Bruneian teachers and students view these technologies with regard to teaching and learning.

Conceptual Framework

Social Penetration Theory (SPT), put forth by Altman and Taylor (1973), is a key theoretical framework in psychology and interpersonal communication that has been used in a number of research contexts, including such varied areas as business ethics (Baack, Fogliasso, & Harris, 2000), online dating (Gibbs, Ellison, & Heino, 2006), personal information management online (Panos, 2014), and topics of online blogger self-disclosure (Tang & Wang, 2012). Some of its application in educational research has dealt with instructor self-disclosure and student evaluations (Lannutti & Strauman, 2006; Zhai, 2012).

SPT looks at how closeness in relationships develops and how relationships progress from superficial to intimate through interpersonal communication and self-disclosure. Self-disclosure is one of the main concepts in SPT and involves revealing details about oneself to others. Thus, it seems apt to utilize it to examine the progression of the teacher-student relationship through how much personal information is shared. According to McLean (2006), self-disclosure is "information, thoughts, or feelings we tell others about ourselves that they would not otherwise know" (p. 112). The more self-disclosure occurs, the more the relationship progresses toward higher levels of intimacy. Two important aspects of self-disclosure are breadth, which refers to

the number of topics that are discussed in a relationship, and depth, which refers to how deep the discussion goes and how intimate the details get. As the breadth and depth of self-disclosure and discussion in a relationship increase, intimacy also increases. A relationship also becomes more intimate usually when there is reciprocity in self-disclosure. This means that the parties involved respond to one another in kind with personal ideas or information that is appropriately similar in breadth or depth. This increases closeness and trust.

A common metaphor used by Altman and Taylor (1973) in SPT is that of the 'onion', that is, the personality is like an onion with different layers representing different levels (Figure 2).

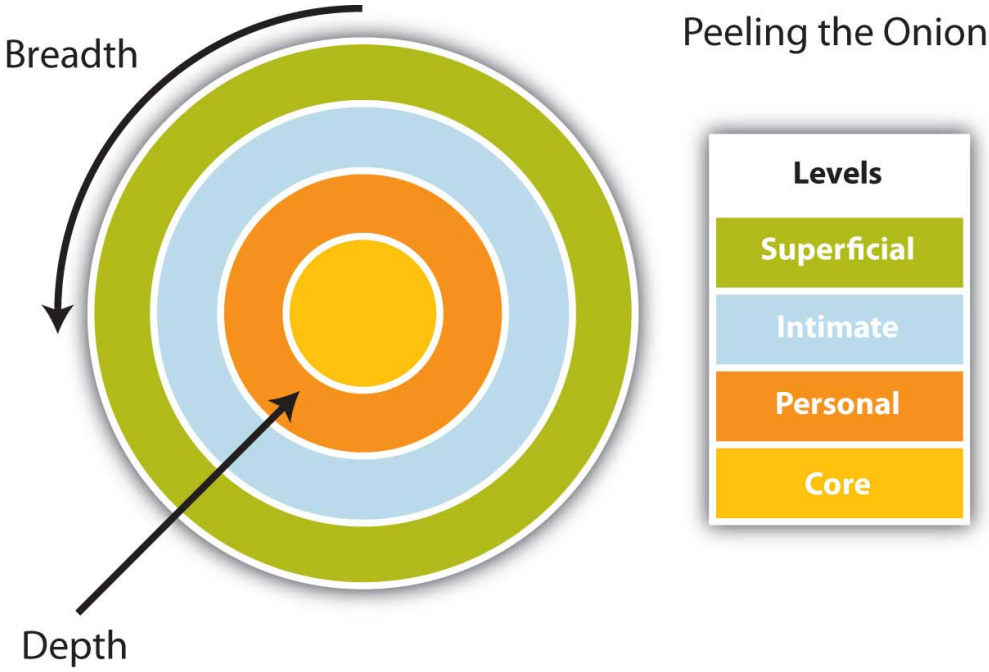

Figure 2. Social Penetration Theory (McLean, 2012, p. 535).

The outer layer is the public self that is obvious to the outside world, such as race or gender. The inner layers tend to be details and characteristics that are displayed or revealed through self-disclosure, such as personal beliefs, attitudes, and ideas. The central core represents the private self and self-concept, which also includes the deepest personal beliefs and thoughts. As self-disclosure and reciprocity increase, self-disclosure progresses through a number of stages — the orientation stage, exploratory affective stage, affective stage, stable exchange stage, and a possible depenetration stage. Altman and Taylor defined these stages thusly:

Orientation stage. This initial stage involves simple superficial topics and 'small talk' such as discussing the weather. Individuals tend to stick to clichés and platitudes that stay within social norms and accepted practices.

Exploratory-affective stage. At this stage, the relationship is more of a casual friendship. Ideas and attitudes are cautiously discussed and shared, which could include opinions on moderate topics like education or government. If sensitive topics are broached, individuals will be hesitant to fully reveal their true thoughts or opinions.

Affective stage. During this stage, details get more personal and private matters are discussed more openly. Individuals are more willing to exchange secrets and personal opinions which were hitherto kept to themselves, and arguments and criticism are more likely. It is at this stage where people are close friends or intimate romantic partners.

Stable exchange stage. By this point, individuals are comfortable enough with one another to share their most personal details, beliefs, values and ideas. Empathy is strong enough that they can predict one another's emotional reactions. Few relationships manage to reach this stage.

Depenetration stage. This stage occurs when a relationship deteriorates. This can happen if there is self-disclosure from one party but a lack of reciprocation from the other. Thus it is felt that the relationship is not worth the effort, disclosure lessens or ends, and the relationship breaks down.

In the case of the teacher-student relationship, students who connect with teachers outside of the classroom exhibit more intimacy and shared control (Dobransky & Frymier, 2004). Self-disclosure can bring about positive turning points in the relationship (Docan-Morgan, 2011; Docan-Morgan & Manusov, 2009) so that it reaches the exploratory-affective stage. A few teachers and students might even reach the affective stage (especially post-graduation). The depenetration stage could possibly occur if teachers or students are unresponsive, unwilling to reciprocate, or respond negatively. It would be interesting to see what effect, if any, social media has on the progression of the relationship through these stages.

Summary

With social media now a fixture of modernity, teachers are faced with new challenges, particularly with regard to the online portrayal of their persona and the effect that might have on

their students, whether academically or in terms of their own credibility in teaching. Moreover, these questions and challenges exist within the societal framework of legal and cultural norms and expectations, adding another set of layers to the already complex landscape of the teacher-student relationship and how it develops.

This chapter examined different aspects of the teacher-student relationship through educational, legal, and cultural lenses. In the next chapter, the aspects of educational impacts and culture are related to the research design and methodology for this study.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Given the preponderance of studies based in what is traditionally understood as the 'West', it seemed pertinent to consider how applicable the findings and conclusions of these Western-based studies are to non-Western regions such as Southeast Asia. The varied cultural differences between people and nations were an important factor to consider in research conducted in a Southeast Asian context. As such, the purpose of this multiple methods research study was to examine Bruneian teacher perspectives on how social media affected their relationships with students and their roles as teachers against the cultural backdrop of Brunei Darussalam. This chapter discusses the research design, conceptual framework, participants and context, role of the researcher, instrumentation and procedures, data collection and analysis, timeline, and validity of the study.

Research Design

This study examined teacher perspectives on how social media affected their relationships with students, as well as their own roles as teachers. Because meaning is "constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 24), this study aimed to describe, understand, and interpret these teacher perspectives on the effect of social media on their own roles as educators, and the meanings they attribute to their interactions and relationships with their students both on- and off-line.

The Qualitative Method

Contemplating the nature of the teacher-student relationship, especially in terms of how those relationships begin, progress, evolve, and perhaps even end, requires a depth of investigation and understanding that is often best gained through qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative research often allows greater exploration of a problem and a more detailed understanding of a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). One of the more common methods utilized is qualitative research interviews, the purpose of which are "to contribute to a body of knowledge that is conceptual and theoretical and is based on the meanings that life experiences hold for the interviewees" (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 314). Gathering

data through qualitative, open-ended, semi-structured interviews, researchers can guide the course of an interview with specific questions while still permitting participants to determine the depth and direction of their responses with minimal constraints.

Subsequently, a researcher can conduct in-depth analyses of participants' thoughts and perspectives by grouping the text of transcribed recordings into larger collections and applying codes, categories, and themes. In doing so, a rich complex picture emerges and this ultimately lets the researcher examine the central phenomenon in question through the lens and contexts of those directly engaged in it. The researcher can then relate the study's findings to the existing body of research, whether by "stating a personal reflection about the significance of the lessons learned during the study; or by drawing out larger, more abstract meanings" (Creswell, 2012, p. 18).

While all qualitative research is characterized by the aim to understand how participants make sense of their experiences, more specific qualitative study types have an additional layer or focus, such as the building of a theory in grounded theory, or the in-depth examination of cultural dimensions in ethnography (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Given the lack of any such specific foci, this current study used the basic qualitative interpretive research approach which yielded a general rich description of the topic (Merriam, 2002) in the form of teachers' thoughts and perceptions with regard to how they interpret their educational world, as well as their connection to their students. These data were then supplemented and framed with further data garnered from quantitative surveys and qualitative 'card sort' tasks.

The research questions for this study were:

1. **How do Bruneian teachers perceive social media is changing their relationships with students?** This question involved teacher perspectives on the effects that social media interactions had on their relationships with their students both inside and outside the classroom, how those changes had come about, and ultimately what this meant for classroom dynamics and learning in general.
2. **How do Bruneian teachers perceive social media is affecting their roles as teachers?** This question sought to examine teacher reflections on their roles of teachers and what effect their social media relationships with students had on those roles, whether inside or outside the classroom.

Conceptual Framework

This study utilized a framework based on Social Penetration Theory (SPT), which looks at how closeness in relationships develops and how relationships progress from superficial to intimate through interpersonal communication and self-disclosure (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Self-disclosure involves revealing information about oneself to others and is one of the main concepts in SPT (Figure 3).

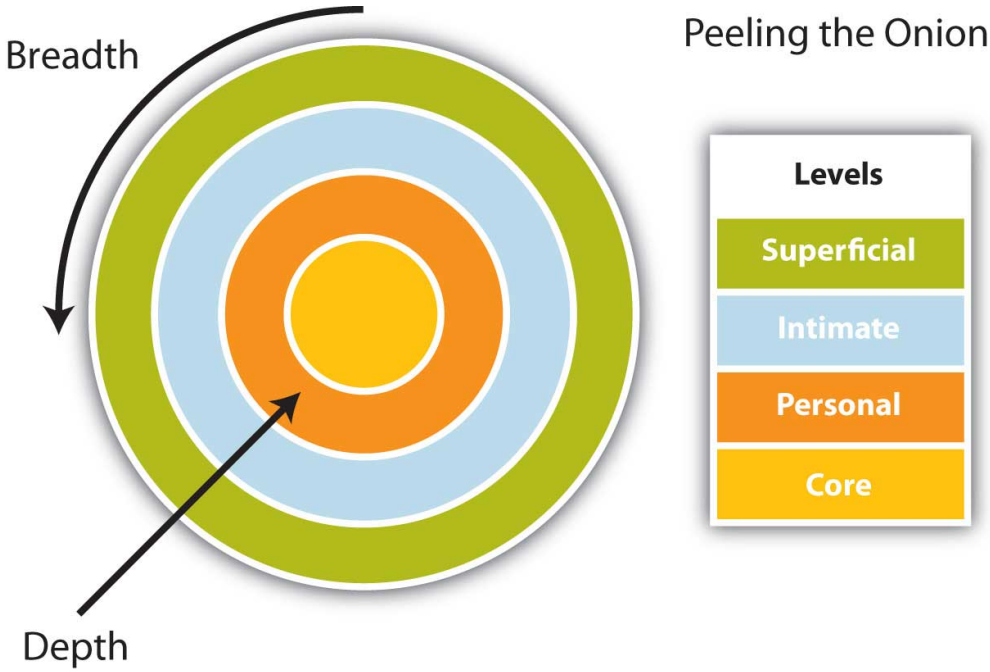

Figure 3. Social Penetration Theory (McLean, 2012, p. 535).

Overall, this study focused on the self-disclosure aspect and its effects on the progress and possible relational turning points (Docan-Morgan, 2011; Docan-Morgan & Manusov, 2009) in the teacher-student relationship. Thus, the interview questions utilized were geared towards gaining insights into teacher perspectives on how relationships with their students progressed through the self-disclosure process, particularly with regard to social media and any role it played those relationships.

Moreover, the study's use of SPT as a framework and its focus on relationship progression and evolution resulted in data that were complex, full of meaning, and richly descriptive (Merriam, 2002). Analyzing those data also took place within the context of the conceptual framework of SPT.

Table 1 illustrates the alignment of the research questions with aspects of the conceptual framework pertinent to this current study.

Table 1. Research Question Alignment

Research Question	Question Aspects	Conceptual Framework Aspects Studied
1. How do teachers think social media is affecting their relationships with students?	Participant perspectives on effects of social media interactions on relationships with students; how those changes have come about; impact on classroom dynamics, teaching, and learning	Relationship progression through self-disclosure and stages involved; effects of social media on self-disclosure and extent thereof
2. How do teachers think social media is affecting their roles as teachers?	Participant reflections on roles as educators; effect of social media relationships with students on those roles	Stages and progression of self-disclosure and impact of social media; effects and impact of social media, increased intimacy, and self-disclosure on participants' perceived roles as educators

Participants and Context

Participants

Ten interview participants from four schools were chosen through purposive qualitative sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This type of sampling allowed the selection of information-rich cases based on certain criteria and from whom the most information and insight could be gained, but who were also accessible in terms of availability and could provide insight into other potential cases to approach for participation in this study. The interviewees were selected through recommendations from acquaintances or were selected from teachers who volunteered for interviews during a survey. The selection of participants was based on specific criteria, namely that they were instructors who taught in an educational institution in Brunei Darussalam and who utilized social media to interact with their students whether in or out of class.

A survey to collect demographic, background, and social media usage data was also randomly distributed at the four schools where interviewees worked. At the end of the survey, relevant respondents could choose to leave their contact details if they consented to be interviewed. Permission to conduct research at the sites was also sought from school principals and administrators. Besides adherence to IRB rules and guidelines, any further regulations regarding research in each Bruneian institution were observed.

Participant identities were kept confidential. Site details were removed from the data and write-up to further protect identities. All data collected were examined thoroughly to ensure that all identifying details were removed and that randomly selected pseudonyms were used to refer to participants. Recordings and transcriptions were kept private and confidential; they were used only for this research study and were deleted or destroyed as appropriate once research was complete. All participants were asked to sign consent forms, and prior to the start of interviews their consent was reconfirmed. Also, before each interview began, I reiterated to each participant the nature of the study, the voluntariness of their participation, and their right to decline answering any question or to terminate the interview at any time. IRB approval was secured prior to the start of the study.

Study Setting

The study was conducted in the nation of Brunei Darussalam — typically referred to simply as Brunei — which is a staunch Malay-Muslim sultanate in Southeast Asia. Malay-Islamic values are enshrined in the national philosophy and ideology known as '*Melayu Islam Beraja'* (MIB), which translates to 'Malay Islamic Monarchy' (Chuchu & Saxena, 2009; Ooi, 2004). This national philosophy promotes Malay language and culture, Islamic principles and beliefs, and the reigning dynastic monarchy, culminating in a value system that dominates institutional norms and behavior. This system also shapes the education system, which in turn further reinforces those values.

Respect and deference given to authority and those in power is demonstrated through the 'Monarchy' part of the philosophy, which calls for respect for the sultan and his government (Ooi, 2004). Moreover, a socio-cultural and sociolinguistic hierarchy is still prevalent in Brunei, such as can be seen in the use of a specialized court language known as *'Bahasa Dalam'* — which is still taught in schools and literally means the 'in language' — when addressing the Sultan, members of the royal family, or high-ranking government officials (Chuchu & Saxena,

2009; Clynes, 2001). Consequently, because of this nationally and culturally-enshrined focus on respect for authority and hierarchy, Brunei's educational practices seem to lend themselves to teacher-centered characteristics, particularly those of being teacher-dominated, lacking group activities and peer interaction, and being examination-oriented (Mundia, 2010; Salam & Shahrill, 2014; Shahrill & Clarke, 2014). These traits go some way in helping us frame how teacher-student relationships form and evolve both inside and outside the classroom in a Bruneian context.

In terms of technology and Internet penetration, a 2015 estimate asserts that 71.2% of the population in Brunei has Internet access, and the vast majority of Bruneians have mobile phones (CIA, 2017).

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher in this qualitative study, I was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, and I brought with me personal biases, subjectivities, and interests (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These potentially influenced multiple aspects of the study, including participant selection, data collection, and analysis, and the interpretation of results. In this current study, a few participants in the sample selected were acquaintances, and I had to make a conscious effort to reflect on any biases I brought to the study. This also included carefully examining and considering any preconceived assumptions either of us held.

In addition, as I conducted the study and collected data, I entered into a particular social context and relationship with participants —that of researcher-researched — which uniquely influenced the data and ultimately the analysis and findings (Finlay, 2002). Since each person — whether researcher or participant — experiences and interprets phenomena differently, a study conducted by a different researcher would have resulted in different data, analysis, and results.

Qualitative research is co-constituted (Finlay, 2002), whereby both researcher and participant play a part in how data and results are shaped. It is also intimate (Howe & Dougherty, 1993), since there is a reduced distance between the researcher and the participant with whom meanings are negotiated. Thus, not only is it important for researchers to be aware of how their own traits and idiosyncrasies can affect their research and data, they must also be aware of the influence of their relationships with participants, whether these connections are pre-existing or newly formed. This awareness is a part of what is known as reflexivity (Finlay, 2002;

Kleinsasser, 2000), whereby the researcher "engages in an explicit, self-aware meta-analysis of the research process" (Finlay, 2002, p.531), which "enables the researcher to untangle personal and theoretical commitments and scrutinize ethics and epistemology, … [and ultimately] produces good data" (Kleinsasser, 2000, p. 161).

Given my relational proximity to a few of the participants in this study, I needed to ensure I was aware of my position and role as researcher and how any relational connections with a participant could color my perspective and interpretation of the data. Furthermore, given my background as an English language teacher and my love for social media, I was personally interested in the context of this study, inasmuch as the impact on both teachers and students was concerned and how their interactions affected their professional and academic lives. According to Dwyer and Buckle (2009), this made me an 'insider' of sorts, as I was conducting research with a population of which I was also a member, enabling increased legitimacy, acceptance, trust and openness with my chosen participants. Despite these benefits, being an insider was not without potential issues. One possible problem was if I interacted with participants from a non-researcher perspective and lapsed into 'teacher' mode, sacrificing objectivity. This could have affected participants' responses since they might have made assumptions about who I was or what I knew, which could have potentially contaminated data with a mix of my own personal experiences and incomplete or skewed participant perspectives.

However, in my position as a researcher in this study, I was also somewhat of an 'outsider'; during the course of this study, I attempted to immerse myself in the mindset and perspective of a researcher and did my best to approach each step of the study with as much academic objectivity as possible. At the same time, I utilized the benefits of my 'insider' teacher subjectivity to my advantage while endeavoring to prevent myself from lapsing into biased and unfounded contaminated assumptions. And therein lies what Dwyer and Buckle (2009) dub 'the space between', a position that goes beyond a dichotomous understanding of 'inside' versus 'outside', but one which brings the two together in the hyphenated role of 'insider-outsider':

> The intimacy of qualitative research no longer allows us to remain true outsiders to the experience under study and, because of our role as researchers, it does not qualify us as complete insiders. We now occupy the space between, with the costs and benefits this status affords. (p. 61)

Instrumentation and Procedures

Social Penetration Theory, particularly the concept of self-disclosure, was used to guide and align the qualitative interview protocol (Appendix A). A semi-structured interview containing 13 open-ended questions was utilized, which yielded rich descriptions about teacher perspectives on their relationship with students and their role as teachers.

A survey questionnaire (Appendix B) was used to collected data on the demographics of the sample population and their usage of social media. These data helped to better portray the background in which the participant and phenomena were situated. The survey questions were adapted from Roblyer, McDaniel, Webb, Herman, and Witty (2010).

Table 2 matches the research instruments to the concepts studied and lists their source.

Table 2. Research Instruments

Instrument	Concepts Studied	Source/Authors
Interview Protocol	Participant demographic and background information; participant's social media usage, and effects on teacher-student relationship and teacher role	Self-developed
Card sort (during interview)	Participant perceptions of their students' 'digital nativity'; any perceived commonalities between themselves and their students; impact this may have had on their teaching	- Faiks and Hyland (2000); Santos (2006) - Card content adapted from previous study (Eichelberger, 2015)
Survey Questionnaire	Demographic, background, and social media usage data of the sample population in which the participant and phenomena were situated	Roblyer et al. (2010)

Data Collection

This study utilized three methods to collect data, namely semi-structured interviews to gain data on teacher perspectives, a card sort during the interview comparing digital native traits between teacher and students, and surveys to gain data on demographics, backgrounds, and social media usage. All interviews and surveys were conducted in English.

Following guidelines suggested by DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006), the semi-structured interviews were guided by a set of open-ended questions, with further sub-questions and probes emerging over the course of the dialogue with each participant. Each interview took between 30 to 90 minutes to conduct. During the interview, I built rapport with the participant and guided the entire process using an interview protocol (Creswell, 2012) to elicit the relevant responses required for the study while simultaneously allowing the participant flexibility to adequately and freely express their thoughts, ideas and viewpoints. This allowed a certain amount of structure to fulfill the need for the specific types of information relevant to the current topic, yet enabled flexibility in response and reaction depending on the context and situation at hand (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It was also important for me to remain as neutral as possible and avoid expressing personal opinions or agreeing with participant sentiments (Creswell, 2012). Most interviews were conducted in person at times convenient for the participants in a quiet area on school grounds, although one interview was conducted online through Skype. One interview per participant was conducted. Interview recordings were made (with participant permission) using software on a mobile device, and I recorded in field notes any relevant thoughts, observations, and reflections I had during the interviews.

During interviews, I asked participants to perform a ‘card sort’ task (Faiks & Hyland, 2000; Santos, 2006), a method used in a previous study in which I participated (Eichelberger, 2015). They were given a set of cards with different phrases pertaining to the characteristics of digital natives (Thompson, 2013) and asked to categorize them in terms of whether they thought each phrase applied to themselves, and then to their students, and also the impact that this might have had on their teaching. This helped to illustrate any perceived commonalities — or lack thereof — between themselves and their students, and whether their teaching was thus influenced. Pictures of the card sorts were also taken for later analysis.

Surveys are used when attempting to describe the distribution of variables across a certain population (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and allows one to make inferences or draw conclusions

about that population (Creswell, 2012). To that end, 110 printed questionnaires were distributed to the general population of teachers in the four schools where the chosen participants taught. Since the questionnaire did not have too many questions, completed pages were collected over the course of a short period of time. This data set yielded general demographic, background, and social media usage data for the teaching population in those schools.

Data Analysis

Data Management

Audio recordings of participant interviews were transcribed verbatim using Microsoft Word, and then edited for clarity and grammar. I performed all transcriptions, which enabled me to gain increased familiarity with the data. To guide and streamline the transcription process, I used strategies suggested by Creswell (2012) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016), which included line numbering, and the usage of italics to differentiate between interviewer and interviewee utterances.

All data files were organized and stored on my computer in password-protected encrypted folders. In order to pre-empt any potential loss or corruption of data, duplicates of all data were also stored as password-protected online backups on a cloud storage website (Creswell, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Qualitative Comparative Analysis

Analysis of the data took the form of qualitative comparative analysis, specifically the inductive form of constant comparison analysis in which codes emerged from the data (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007, 2008; Mayring, 2000). Once the data were transcribed, open coding was used to analyze the collected data for patterns and chunk it into smaller parts using codes. This was followed by analytical coding to find commonalities and group coded chunks together into categories and themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These codes, categories, and themes were arranged hierarchically to help me visualize the data. The data were then presented using the themes to define the headings and with quotations and appropriate excerpts to support conclusions drawn. Major ideas and conclusions were related to the research literature, as well as the relevant aspects of Social Penetration Theory.

Throughout the process, I wrote analytic memos to elaborate and reflect on thoughts I had about the transcripts and on any codes I may have assigned up to that point. This resulted in an ongoing reflexive inner monologue and commentary that I considered as I examined and discussed the data sets, allowing me to develop new ideas or see connections and explanations I might have missed earlier (Creswell, 2012).

In terms of data analysis software, Dedoose was used to code and manage the interview data. Its functions and features allowed me to keep track of coded excerpts and easily chunk codes together according to patterns that emerged from the data. Screenshots of a coded excerpt (Figure 4) and the code hierarchy (Figure 5) in Dedoose were taken to illustrate this process.

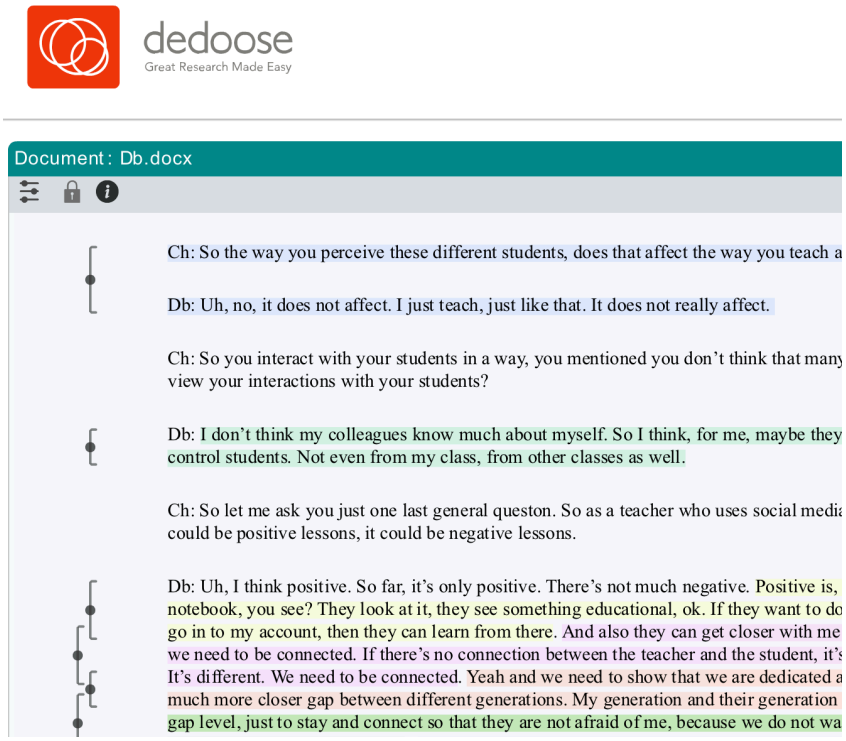

Figure 4. Example of a Coded Excerpt in Dedoose

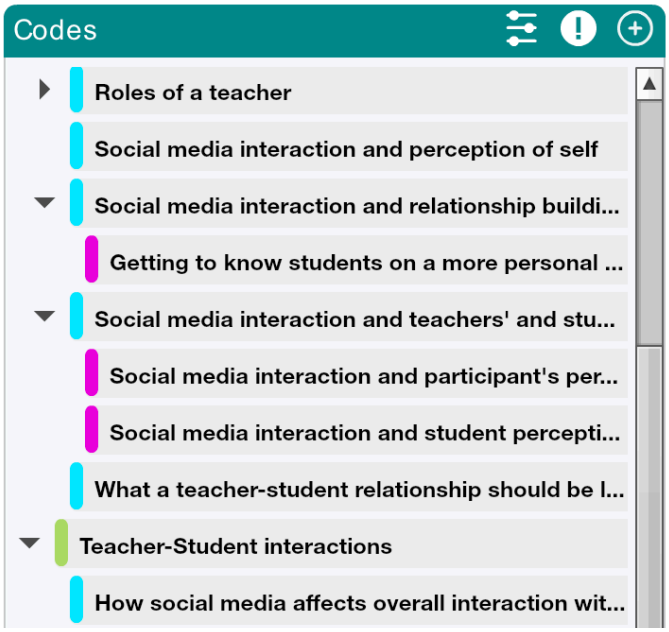

Figure 5. Example of Code Hierarchy in Dedoose

Quantitative Data Analysis

I digitized the survey responses by entering them into a digital version of the survey on Google Forms, after which I collated the results into a Google Spreadsheet. Google's 'Explore' feature allowed me to analyze different statistical aspects of the data, as well as visualize the data through bar charts, pie charts, and histograms. The resulting data were then compared to the qualitative data to provide context.

Card Sort Analysis

The card sort pictures were analyzed alongside the qualitative discussions of the traits during interviews. Similarities and differences between participants and their students seen in the pictures of the card sort were noted and then compared to what participants had brought up during the interview regarding impacts on their teaching. This was then also related to the qualitative interview data to see if there were any connections or effects on later questions.

Validity

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), trustworthiness, validity, and reliability in qualitative research can be characterized in terms of credibility, transferability, and dependability. There are a number of techniques that can be used to ensure trustworthiness in these aspects,

namely member checks, triangulation, clear rich description, audit trails, and reflexivity (Carlson, 2010).

Credibility

To increase credibility, member checks, triangulation, and peer debriefing were conducted.

Two rounds of member checks were carried out. The first round took place after all interviews had been transcribed. I emailed all participants their transcripts and asked them to review them in order to verify their accuracy. Out of the ten participants, three replied. The first had found no errors and said the transcript was accurate. The second suggested a few minor edits to clarify what she had said. The third expressed concern over grammatical errors he had made during the interview. I explained that grammatical accuracy was not something that mattered in this study, but I assured him I would edit any quotes I used for grammar and clarity. The second round of member checks took place once I had written up my interpretations of what I believed participants had said. I emailed each of the ten participants again and asked them to review my interpretation of the data they had provided. This allowed me to find out if my interpretations matched their perspectives of their own experiences (Carlson, 2010). Out of the ten participants, five replied and stated that my interpretations were accurate. One of them suggested a few minor clarifications, but said they were not necessary if I felt they changed the context of what she had said. They did not, so I applied her suggestions.

Methodological and data triangulation (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007) occurred through the use of multiple research methods and data sources. These included qualitative teacher perspectives from interviews, digital native trait comparisons from the card sort task during the interviews, and quantitative demographic, background, and social media usage data garnered through surveys.

Peer debriefing (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007) took the form of a peer coder review, where I approached a peer reviewer to scan some of my data to see if my codes, themes, and conclusions were plausible and relevant. The peer reviewer asked questions and made suggestions that I used to refine and streamline my data analysis. The reviewer felt that because of the richness of the data, there was a lot more information I could have teased out from the data, but overall found that my themes, interpretations, and conclusions were plausible and applicable.

Transferability

To promote transferability, all research contexts, appropriate participant information, data collection techniques, and findings were clearly and richly described, with added relevant quotes and data from participant interviews and surveys. This allowed the audience to confirm for themselves how the categories, interpretations, and conclusions were generated (Meyrick, 2006).

Dependability

Besides the aforementioned triangulation, an audit trail was created to enhance the study's dependability. This audit trail took the form of a journal and memos containing my thoughts, questions, and reflections about the research process from data collection, analysis, and interpretation, as well as a reflexive acknowledgement and discussion of my own biases and assumptions as a researcher in order to safeguard against researcher or confirmation bias (Finlay, 2002; Kleinsasser, 2000; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).

Summary

This study aimed to examine the perspectives of teachers who used social media to interact with their students, and how social media affected those relationships. Interviews with relevant participants yielded rich, descriptive data on their perspectives, and surveys with samples of the general population yielded useful demographic and social media usage data in which to ground the more in-depth participant perspectives. The collected data were analyzed, coded, and themed, and are presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

My intent in this study was to examine how social media is affecting the teacher-student relationship and teacher roles. There were two research questions in this study. The first question involved teacher perspectives on the effects that social media interactions have on their relationships with their students, how those changes came about, and ultimately what this might mean for classroom dynamics and learning in general. The second question sought to examine teacher reflections on their roles as teachers and what effect their social media relationships with students had on those roles. Data analysis encompassed digital native trait comparisons, quantitative data, and qualitative data. The card sort and quantitative data framed the qualitative data collected from interviews, and ultimately supported them and gave them weight.

In this chapter I report the results from the card sort, the interview coding and the survey aggregation, and analyze the resulting qualitative and quantitative data sets according to themes and patterns I identified.

Participant Details

I interviewed 10 participants who agreed to take part in this study. In this section, I list brief details for each participant, including age and the number of years they have been teaching. The participants are also grouped according to the school where they teach (Table 3).

Card Sort

Early during each interview, I asked participants to complete a ‘card sort’ task in which they were given 15 different cards, each printed with a digital native trait. I first asked them to consider which traits they felt applied to them most and which traits applied the least. Once done, I asked them to repeat the step, but this time to consider which traits applied most and least to their students instead. Once both arrangements were completed, I asked them to consider if these differences they saw had any impact on their teaching.

Table 3. Participant Information

School	Participant Alias	Teaching Level	Age	No. of years teaching
School 1	Nancy	Secondary	27	5
	Paula	Secondary	~ 50s	28
	Shawn	Secondary	26	2
School 2	Dan	Secondary	31	8
	Fiona	Primary	26	2
School 3	Claire	A Level	32	7
	Lisa	A Level	33	8
	Oscar	A Level	61	38
	Zara	A Level	~ Mid-30s	10
School 4	Tina	Secondary/ University	32	7

Digital Native Trait Comparisons

These reflections painted a picture of how well participants felt these traits applied both to themselves as teachers and to their students (the stereotypical 'digital natives'), and how these comparisons might affect their teaching. The only participant who did not do the card sort was Oscar, as his interview was conducted online.

Claire. Claire listed 'preference for constant connectivity' as her students' highest trait. She noticed that many of them were heavily reliant on the Internet to find answers to tasks she gave them in class. While some of the "higher-ability" students would use information found on the Internet to supplement their own thoughts, for most of the others there was "no active thinking going on" and "whatever they get, they would put it into their work." She explained that at her school, there was a push for student-centered learning, which meant she was supposed to let the students explore before giving any input. She often found this a little difficult because she felt her students were not the "curious type" and she often had to provide instructions and information to "nudge them in the right direction first before they actually start something." This led her to rely on a more teacher-centered teaching style, as she wanted to ensure they had as

much information as possible before they began exploring resources related to the task. When I asked her about the trait 'novelty of technology may be distracting', she noted that her students did not find technology distracting at all and so she placed it as the trait that least applied in their list. On the other hand, it was the trait that most applied in her list. She explained that instead of "relying on technology as a supplementary tool", her students were dependent on it and believed it helped them learn. For her part, she minimized any use of technology in the classroom and felt that "there's no quality learning taking place if I make use of technology". An example of this was her insistence that students write down by hand what was displayed on the class whiteboard or projector instead of simply using their smartphones to take a picture, as she believed writing by hand aided learning whereas simply snapping a picture did not.

Dan. There were a number of differences that Dan noted between himself and his students. The first that he brought up was the 'expectation that technology is part of the landscape; difficulty with landscapes that lack technology', which he placed at the top of his students' list. He granted that while "we cannot live without technology", the trait was lower on his own list because it was not an issue for him if it was not present. For his students, however, he felt that "it's like it's part of their body already." His students also had a high 'preference for fantasy contexts as found in games and realistic TV and movies', something he felt he had outgrown. The 'preference for learning through activity rather than reading or listening' was also something he found to be true in his students; they tended to prefer activity-based project work over reading textbooks or text exercises. This seemed to be linked to the next trait, the 'loss of ability to read in a linear manner', where Dan lamented his students' habit of skipping earlier chapters in a reading because they thought it was "easy". This would often leave them unprepared for difficult exam questions as they had skipped the earlier "foundation chapters". One trait he felt he shared with them was the 'preference for constant connectivity', and explained that one way this manifested itself was in getting to know his students online to ensure they knew he was there to help them. Another shared trait he found was that both he and his students did not find the 'novelty of technology distracting', since students "prefer technology" and teachers today also utilize technology in their teaching and the resources they use.

Fiona. Fiona found her students' 'craving for speed and inability to tolerate slow-paced environments' to be "very challenging" as they were used to instant gratification. This made them very impatient, which was further demonstrated in their 'impatience with guided

instruction', which Fiona admitted could be slower than students would sometimes prefer. She noted her students' 'preference for pictures rather than text', speculating that their continual exposure to Instagram was a factor. This also seemed to affect their 'ability to scan text and process information quickly'; Fiona reflected that she and her peers read a lot as children, more so than her students today who "get images blasted to them." However, she was optimistic that this was "still something that can be trained, something they can learn". One way she hoped to promote this was by doing "a lot of reading with them". Perhaps the largest difference Fiona observed with her students was the 'expectation that technology was part of the landscape', which was high on her students' list but low on hers. She avoided using technology in the classroom because she felt it important they "learn to read, especially at a younger level"; exposure to more technology would inevitably come later as they grew and advanced to higher levels of education. However, the opposite was true for the 'preference for constant connectivity'; it was high on her list but low on her students' list, though she did point out this might simply be because the students were "not allowed to be at their phones 24/7". For herself, while she did not expect technology to be everywhere, she did prefer to be continually connected.

Lisa. When I asked about impacts on her teaching, Lisa remarked that her students often took a while to understand or complete activities she tasked them with and that they still expected a lot of instructions from her. To remedy this, she tried to use a lot of media in the classroom, such as getting them to go online to do research to complete tasks. However, she observed that they often lacked the skills needed to do this research. I noticed a few traits that Lisa possessed that her students did not, namely the 'preference for constant connectivity', 'preference for collaboration', and 'desire or perceived need to multitask'. When I brought them up and asked how it affected her teaching, she expressed that her students did not do well with group work and preferred to work on their own. In addition, they often needed to focus on one thing at a time and had problems balancing multiple tasks.

Nancy. The first trait I asked Nancy about was her students' high 'preference for fantasy contexts', something which was low on her own list. She noted that this was just "their generation", but this sometimes made it hard to teach more fact-based subjects like History or Geography. She also mentioned that her students had an 'expectation that technology' would be used, a trait she did not share. She explained that resources were limited and that school facilities like computer labs were not always available during class time. On the other hand, while she

could teach without technology, she felt it was important to strike a balance and sometimes used educational games to help illustrate and explain a topic. However, using technologies like educational games to support learning often caused students to expect that "since there's one topic with that game, it seems like every topic has got a game". As a result, she had to explain to her students that finding educational games for everything was not easy, and needed to use different ways to teach certain topics.

Paula. I noticed in Paula's lists that there were significant differences in more than half of the 15 traits. The traits which were high on her students' lists but low on hers were the 'preference for constant connectivity', 'preference for fantasy contexts', 'expectation that technology is part of the landscape', and 'impatience with guided instruction'. Traits high on her list but low on her students' were the 'desire or perceived need to multitask', the 'ability to scan text and process information quickly', 'expectation for immediate feedback', 'tendency to process information in nonlinear ways' and 'craving for speed'. When asked about them, she expressed that her task was ultimately to ensure students were prepared for the exams, and that her "job is to cater to their needs". She made it a point to try and perceive lessons from their perspectives, and cited that as an example of "student-orientated" learning. However, she stated that when it came to classroom discipline and social etiquette, she was "very much a stickler, … because when somebody talks, you listen."

Shawn. The first trait that stood out to Shawn was the 'expectation of technology'; he felt it was not very applicable to himself as he was fine learning without technology and could just use "good old textbooks" or go to the library. However, he observed that students today preferred visual aids like projectors and computers, and relied heavily on the Internet for answers. When I prompted him to discuss how his teaching was impacted, he mentioned that providing visual aids and information he had gained online was one way he catered to their needs. However, he shared a similar sentiment to Nancy when it came to using technology with his students — he felt it best to use some technology and "meet them halfway, but not completely", as they might otherwise "get used to it and they might expect that I will teach the same way every single time." He also cited the lack of a projector in every classroom as an obstacle, and thus he could not always meet all of their needs. Another trait he discussed was 'preference for collaboration'. Although it was not high on his students' list, he felt that "peer teaching does help them" and tried to find ways to make the tasks he gave them collaborative, though it made

assessment a bit more challenging; sometimes he found it difficult to consider each student's individual strengths and weaknesses in group projects. I asked him about the 'loss of ability to read in a linear manner', which was at different ends of both lists. That is, he could read linearly, while observing that his students often did not. His thoughts mirrored Dan's — his students frequently opted to skip earlier topics in favor of those they preferred, or simply because they thought earlier topics were too easy. As a result of this overconfidence, they could miss out on important information relevant to their learning.

Tina. In considering the arranged traits, Tina found it interesting that the 'expectation that technology is part of the landscape' was low on both lists, and thought that it was due to the teaching and learning environment one is used to. She pointed out that although they did have projectors in classrooms at the university, a breakdown of the technology would not derail the class and teaching could still continue. For the 'preference for fantasy contexts', Tina reflected on her time as a secondary school teacher when she had a lot of gamers in her class and how it was easy for them to imagine scenarios from reading passages she gave them. She observed that her current university-level students had more trouble doing so unless it was realistic or they had experienced it themselves. 'Impatience with guided instruction' existed as a spectrum in her students; while some were "eager to go off on their own", others would wait for instructions, asking her what to do next or how to perform a task. The 'preference for learning through activity' was a shared trait at the top of both lists, and Tina explained that this factored into how she taught in class and the sorts of activities and content she used in an effort to "not make it boring for myself and for the students". The 'ability to scan text and process information quickly' was lacking in her students, though she felt that this could have simply been a result of her being older and more experienced with handling academic material and reading. She also pointed out that most of her students were Arabic-medium students, which made reading in English more challenging for them. She tackled this by using the 'flipped classroom' method; she would give them tasks to prepare for their next class, which ensured they had ample time to work on the material. This language barrier also had a possible influence on other traits: Tina noticed that her students processed visual information faster than blocks of text, and as such had a 'preference for pictures' and a "multimedia experience rather than just reading", which was evident when she would give them reading passages and they would ask if there was a video version. They also

often read texts linearly and found it difficult to seek out relevant sections of text, even after Tina instructed them to do so.

Zara. When I asked her about the traits she had arranged, Zara stated that the challenge of the teacher was to prevent their teaching from being boring, and that because teachers had more experience in life, they were not "just delivering education but sort of making [students] aware" of what lay ahead of them. I remarked on how there were a number of differences between the lists, such as the 'ability to scan text' or the 'desire or perceived need to multitask', traits that were higher on Zara's list but at the bottom of her students'. She noted that these differences meant that they had to meet halfway, where as a teacher she had to "learn how to slow down [to their pace of learning], and for them, they learn how to speed up". She used an example of examinations where time was often short and students had to learn to read, think, and underline important points simultaneously, instead of reading and then pausing to think for a few minutes at a time before writing anything down.

Participant commonalities. All participants rated certain traits as applying to themselves. 'Mixing of work and play' was high on all participants' lists, and it was often the case that this trait also applied to their students. 'The ability to scan and process information quickly' was also a trait participants felt applied to themselves. Other traits did not see much commonality; some traits were rated highly applicable for some participants, and not so applicable for others.

Summary. The card sort was conducted as a means of gaining insight into any perceived similarities and differences between participants and their students in terms of digital native traits (Prensky, 2001a, 2001b; Thompson, 2013). Setting this foundation early in the interview allowed participants to think in terms of how their commonalities with students affected their technology usage and whether those comparisons had any effects on their teaching, as well as any further implications on social media usage, classroom dynamics, and student learning.

During the card sort activity, when asked how the similarities and differences they perceived between them and their students affected their teaching, each participant would begin by focusing on the differences, explaining what they were and how they factored into their teaching and classroom management styles. This implied that for the most part, participants perceived themselves quite differently from their students, at least where digital native traits were concerned. Findings also showed that most of the participants who might have been defined as 'digital natives' themselves did not even necessarily have many traits in common with one

another; only two traits seemed to be commonly perceived as applicable across participants, namely the mixing of work and play, and the ability to scan and process information quickly. Interestingly, the sole 'digital immigrant' participant also possessed these two traits. It is unlikely that these traits had anything to do with an inherent 'digital native' nature, and could have been developed over time as a result of age and experience. Moreover, different participants had different perceptions of their students' traits, which showed the diversity between students. Thus, participants had to adapt their teaching methods and styles accordingly, with some even having to balance teaching higher-ability and lower-ability students. This finding is consistent with what Bennett, Maton, and Kervin (2008) discovered in their critical review of literature surrounding the 'digital native' debate: while there has been evidence that some young people do fit under the 'digital native' umbrella, there is still a significant portion for whom the label who does not apply and who do not have access to technology and the accompanying knowledge that comes with it. They argued that a strict dichotomy into natives and immigrants is unrealistic since there appears to be a considerable portion of the so-called digital native population that does not have the same purported level of technological access or skills, and it seems that "there is as much variation within the digital native generation as between the generations" (p. 778-779).

One trait that a number of participants saw among their students was the expectation that technology was part of the landscape, especially in the classroom. While many participants did not perceive this as something they had in common with their students, some of them did their best to strike a balance between using whatever technological resources were available to them in the classroom and making sure their students did not become over-reliant on these technologies. Other participants felt that technology detracted from opportunities for real learning in the classroom, and they carefully monitored or minimized its usage as a result. This finding framed their discussion of social media usage later in the interviews; it implied that participants saw social media as a tool to supplement classroom teaching, particular in out-of-class contexts, and not as something to be folded into actual classroom usage.

Overall, participants stated that their perceived trait similarities and differences with their students did have an effect on their teaching, and they all did their best to build on similarities and accommodate differences in ways they believed were most conducive to classroom dynamics and student learning. Comparing this finding with later sections of their interviews

suggests that their usage of social media was often a useful part of their workflow and one of the tools they utilized in adapting their teaching methods, particularly outside the classroom.

Interviews

I interviewed 10 teachers from four educational institutions to provide an overview of different levels, teaching styles, backgrounds, and experiences. As I began coding the interviews, I kept my research questions in the back of my mind, examining the data for any impacts of social media, as well as how participants used it with their students. I also kept in mind the conceptual framework of Social Penetration Theory, and ways in which participants' relationships with their students evolved. The themes that emerged involved how social media affected three things: relationship-building, teacher-student interactions, and classroom dynamics.

Social Media Interaction and Relationship-Building

Increased online interaction not only allowed participants to further reach out to their students in their capacities as teachers, but also to build their relationships in different ways beyond simply academics. They were able to share more personal information with one another, and in doing so, got to know one another better over time. As a result, their relationships often evolved beyond that of just teacher and student and gained new dimensions as their perceptions of one another changed. However, participants still felt there were certain boundaries that needed to be adhered to.

Disclosure of personal information. Participants found that increased online interaction brought with it greater disclosure of personal information. Some of their students they connected with were bold and asked the participants about personal information or approached them for advice.

> As for my experience, I would say that these students who tend to connect with me online are the ones who try to get to know you more on a personal level. … They do tend to ask me personal questions or maybe personal advice. So I would say I wouldn't have gotten to know some of them if it weren't for those interactions with them. (Shawn)

In connecting on social media, participants and their students both gained access to personal information about each other, such as details about family: "They're on my Instagram, they're on my Facebook, so we share, I guess, more personal things. I know about their family, they know

about mine" (Lisa), and personal interests: "Students in my class wouldn't know that I have an interest in this thing, while those who have access to my social media would see that I post a lot about it" (Tina). Gaining these insights into one another's personal lives allowed participants to find common ground and build on their connections with students.

> So like, maybe the last time they see me update my status, it would be about a place where I ate, for example, and the food there. So they might use that as a starting point for us to have a conversation and it gets from one point to another point to another point, rather than someone who I have not met at all for a while. (Claire)

Getting to know one another. Using social media to connect with their students academically was usually the first step participants took in reaching out to them. Interactions would often be solely about class or school matters, but as time went on and participants and students both shared more information with one another, both sides got more comfortable and things progressed to more personal levels.

> Usually it would start like, the students are going to be asking me questions. They will initiate chats and everything. Once the question has been answered, sometimes they will just, "Oh OK, thank you. See you tomorrow." That's it. But some students who are secretly in need of something that they think I could help, they would somehow beat around the bush first. And then when I get the point that they need something, when I get to the point where I ask them "Is there something wrong?", that's when they will start to open up and maybe the chat will be much longer. That's when they seek personal advice or maybe just 'getting-to-know-you' sessions. (Shawn)

Once the barrier had been overcome and students saw that their teacher was more approachable, the comfort and familiarity with one another increased. As Claire put it, students "know that they don't have to hide from you anymore because you also get to see them on a more personal level. So in that aspect, everything is out in the open. You sort of know each other." Paula found that when she approached students, they seemed to open up more readily. Nancy stated that as she got to know many of her students, she began to understand them more. Moreover, it was often the quieter students she got to know as they opened up to her.

> They're very quiet in a way that they don't talk and seems like they don't have friends. So when we started, I interacted with them in social media. I tend to learn more about

> them, because they open up. It's not that I ask them. Most of the time they tell the story. They open up. So in a way I would understand them more, because of this stuff, because they are interacting with me through this. (Nancy)

Fiona pondered her students' readiness to be open, and mused:

> I feel like students open up more now, just because that's the culture of the world today, of their generation, that you can just express yourself and be free to be you. And so they expect their teachers, they expect us to accept them as they are and they present that to us. (Fiona)

Beyond teacher and student. Teachers often maintain certain "strict" or "educational" personas and relationships with their students in their capacities as instructors. However, in the process of connecting and interacting with students online and exchanging personal information, participants found that many of these personas and relationships evolved. Both sides were able to understand one another more as complex individuals rather than simply under the labels of 'student' and 'teacher'. Fiona admitted that she was quite a young teacher and needed to maintain a strict persona, but once her students got to know her, she let her guard down and became more personal with them, especially outside the classroom. Tina stated that teaching was not just transmitting knowledge and that "it's not a simple teacher-student relationship anymore." It is important to ensure students can use that knowledge and "I think to achieve that goal, the relationship between teacher and student is very important. You can't really reach students if it's a formal classroom relationship." Tina used an analogy of "breaking a barrier". She felt that she was a coach and mentor to her students, but before one is able to assume those roles, "you need to break the wall first. And you can't really do it if you are in that hole of, teacher in one hole, student in another hole." Two of the participants, Paula and Oscar, were older than the others and had longer careers, and as such, had unique 'parental' perspectives on their relationships with their students. This was perhaps due to the larger age gap between themselves and their students, as compared to the younger participants and theirs. Both Oscar and Paula discussed a passion for their jobs and helping students succeed, something that grew over the course of their careers. Oscar held that teachers are "taken as parents, or relatives, uncles, aunties, who are really concerned about [students'] welfare." Paula initially did not utilize any social media, but she noticed over time that most of her students were active on those platforms and realized that if she

wanted to reach out to them to try and help them, she would have to enter their world and connect with them there. In doing so, her students became more comfortable with her, seeing beyond her "nasty" persona and referring to her as the "class mama", a role she had embraced over the course of her career.

> That's how I feel, because they're given to our care. And somewhere, somehow, for me personally, I deem it as my responsibility. Academically, you learn something from me. Non-academically about life, it is my duty to prepare you for what comes down the road. … So, I view myself as a parent. A nasty parent. With high expectations. [Laughs]. (Paula)

Tina had also previously experienced having a 'parental' persona. Although her friendships with her current university-level students were often sibling-like, her teaching career began at a secondary school where the larger age difference meant "they saw me more of as a mother figure, while here it's more like a sister or a friend."

While Dan acknowledged that the teacher-student boundary was often unavoidable, he felt that "if there's no connection between the teacher and the student, it's just as if I'm sitting in front and the students are doing their work. It's different". Building these connections at times led to moments where students did get closer to him and attempted to garner favor with him by liking multiple pictures on his social media feeds or simply obeying what he says: "There are some who want to get closer in the hope of maybe to win my heart or something like that. And they will obey whatever I ask them to do." This was also experienced by Oscar, who found that as students got to know him, comfort and trust increased: "When they get to know me, they see the softer side, you know? They become very comfortable with me. They become so close with me because they trust me fully, 100%."

Changing perceptions. Getting to know one another through the sharing of personal information often involves changes in teacher and student perceptions of one another, and social media often provides a platform for these changes to occur. Teachers are frequently able to see different sides of their students that may not be as evident in real life, and this in turn might influence how they see them. Tina stated that it was unavoidable for her to perceive certain students differently simply because she would know more about the students with whom she connected online. Claire reflected on how all the social networking with her students reminded

her that "each student is different" and helped her to perceive them as "individuals rather than as students". Nancy stated that these perceptions sometimes even changed the way she went about class discipline; as she learned about some students' problems or issues, she became more empathetic and sometimes scolded them less than others, though she admitted that this was often less than fair.

Students also often have their perceptions of their teachers change when they connect and interact with them online. Someone once seen as a "fierce", "harsh", or "tough" teacher could ease apprehension by displaying their softer side online: "Sometimes through social media, they see the other side of me when I share certain jokes or when I share certain personal experiences" (Oscar). Shawn recalled how his students were surprised that he could talk to them "like a normal person" because they always figured that "teachers don't chat with students." Fiona felt that her students respected her for being able to connect and interact with them on social media. Tina noted that she tended to be more relaxed on her Instagram account because the only students she had on it were those she considered close friends, prompting one of them to remark that she was "different on Instagram." As for the students with whom she did not connect online, they usually had different perceptions of her and did not really see the relaxed side of her.

> They would get glimpses of it from their friends. Because their friends would tell them, "Oh, yesterday I went with Miss [Tina], yada yada yada." "Oh, really? But she doesn't seem like the kind who would do that sort of thing." (Tina)

Paula encountered similar situations when some of her students showed classmates their online interactions with her, or spread the word that "it's OK. You can go and see her and she will not kill you. She will not [beat] you or anything." Thus, these other students came to "know that their teacher who is otherwise very unapproachable in school has a human side." Dan connected with students on social media because he felt it was important for them to see he was there to help. He held that helping his students achieve better grades was not a matter of the syllabus, but of his students' mentality. Contemplating how their mentality had changed, he expressed that teachers "need to play psychology with these students sometimes in order to make them do better", and one way of doing that was to stay up-to-date with social media and take advantage of any benefits it afforded, academic or not. Otherwise, students might feel that teachers were "old-fashioned" and "not up to standard" given how common social media has become.

Observing boundaries. Even though a teacher may feel close to a student, maybe even considering them 'friends', there is often still a teacher-student divide that exists and cannot — or perhaps should not — be crossed. Many participants felt this to be true; regardless of how close they felt with their students or how much social media interaction they had, they acknowledged that their roles and personas were first and foremost as teachers, particularly in the classroom. Zara would sometimes help students with problems they had, but did her best not to get heavily involved in their personal lives. She also felt that with students, "there's always a barrier that's there." Claire expressed that because she was teaching at an A Level institution, she found it easier to view her students as friends, as opposed to if she were teaching at lower secondary levels. But at the end of the day, she had to temper that friendship with professionalism and firmly remind her students that she was their teacher first, ensuring that they did not forget lines and barriers. This was to ensure that she still had some semblance of authority in the classroom as she focused on education and academics.

> So if I don't make that barrier, then I wouldn't be able to assert myself as a teacher and I wouldn't be able to control them more in class. So I've always tried to at least have that kind of teacher-student barrier, even though at the same time try to be their friend. (Claire)

Dan echoed this statement, adding that being close to students often made it difficult to scold or punish students for any infringements. He asserted that "keeping a gap" between himself and his students was important for class management and discipline, to prevent them from taking him for granted. While Tina was friendly with some of her students, she made an effort to maintain a strict classroom persona and distance to preserve the barrier. She expected everyone to practice "some sort of modesty", particularly because "in class, I am still your teacher". However, given that she was teaching at the university level, this did not always aid her in maintaining boundaries; she was closer in age to her students than other participants were to theirs, and she would sometimes forget herself and speak to them like her other friends. One such anecdote involved linguistic boundaries that are often observed in the Malay language. It is common for people to refer to themselves in the third person in more formal settings when speaking Malay, so Tina would refer to herself as 'Miss' instead of 'I' with her students. They in turn would always call her 'Miss' or 'Miss Tina', even outside of class, regardless of what the conversation

was about. But when it involved a group of students she was close to, sometimes she would "slip".

> When addressing myself as 'Miss Tina', I would use other pronouns. … But it only happens with this particular group which I'm very close with. So like, "*Lapar ku eh!*" [I'm hungry!]. With another group of students, it'd be like "*Lapar Miss eh!*" [Miss is hungry!]. You know, it's very telling when it comes to Malay, … because it's indicative of the social … decorum. (Tina)

Some participants maintained the teacher-student divide by guarding personal privacy, whether it was their own or their students'. This could take the form of withholding personal information, maintaining different privacy settings or accounts online, self-monitoring social media posts, or outright not allowing students to befriend them on social networks. With regard to personal questions posted online, Fiona explained that she would answer those questions only if she deemed it necessary for her students' growth and if she could do so face-to-face, because she did not like it "being on social media where everybody can read it, just because I think some people do get the wrong idea about the relationship that is seen." Similarly, Lisa stated that at one point she left everything on her Facebook account open to all her students, and some information she had posted spread to other students and even other teachers. As such, she began to keep certain content behind different privacy settings, and tried to be more judicious about sharing personal pictures or anything about her family. Dan got around this by maintaining two accounts, one personal and one professional, but still thought twice before posting. Nancy was close to only a select few students and maintained a strict teacher-student relationship with the others, outright refusing to allow them to add her on her personal social networks. Even though Tina spent time with her students outside class, she monitored herself when posting pictures or details of their friendship online, as she felt her students' might face peer pressure from other students who might have found their closeness unusual. Students themselves could make the move to guard their own privacy. One of Tina's student friends blocked her on social media, and she found out later this was because the student feared that Tina would reprimand her for her occasional failure to adhere to the university's strict dress code. Tina, for her part, said she would not have done so and admitted to taking the block a little personally.

Some participants mentioned that once their students had graduated, the friendship was free to develop beyond the teacher-student barrier, and "move to the next phase of the friendship" (Paula) with social media as the main methods of contact. Zara said she strove to maintain the barrier until her students graduated, at which point she would be willing to see them as friends. Claire stated that she had become lifelong friends with some of her students after they had graduated, as the boundary between teacher and student "slowly starts to disappear as the years progress."

> Once they finish school, then I'll try to be more on the friend side rather than the teacher side. So for example, if when I'm still teaching them, if they ask me, "Miss, why don't we go out and watch a movie together?" I would say no. But if it's after they graduate, then if they ask me, then yeah, I don't mind because I don't teach them anymore. (Claire)

One relevant boundary in the context of Brunei is that of gender. According to cultural and religious norms, there should be minimal to no physical contact between opposite genders. Most participants were very aware of this in the way they interacted with their students. Dan was very careful when interacting with female students, as he had heard of teachers getting into trouble for touching female students. Paula stressed that, with the exception of a goodbye hug after they graduated from school, there was no touching or hugging with male students and that only female students received any physical contact from her. Even academic interactions with students of the opposite gender often had to be monitored, as Claire explained:

> Even if, for example, at the end of the day you want to have one-on-one teaching with your student and your student happens to be male, it's advisable for you to either have that one-on-one in the staffroom where people can see you, or you have it in class but … providing that you can see through the windows and the doors are open. … So it's sort of an unspoken rule in school. You don't say it but you know what to do already. (Claire)

These norms and boundaries are often unspoken and both participants and their students readily accepted them as the norm. Because of these tacit agreements, social media interactions appeared to stay within appropriate lines, and both teachers and students seemed to implicitly respect gender-based boundaries online. Claire said that she never had issues with her male students because they "unconsciously know the boundaries already", whether it was online or offline. On

the other hand, any transgressions were more obvious in real life situations, as evidenced by a moment when one of her students inadvertently crossed a line:

> So, I had this group of boys. They wanted to take pictures with me, and then one of them accidentally touched my shoulder. A teacher saw that and then he was like, "No, you can't touch your teacher." But for me, it's nothing. Just shrug it off. It's not something that you have to say aloud. (Claire)

None of the participants reported any effect of gender boundaries on their ability to provide academic support if needed, instead maintaining that these boundaries usually applied to personal information. Shawn pointed out that although any student was free to approach him online or offline to seek academic support and ask him questions, if a female student asked him for personal advice or wanted to share personal details, he would refer them to a female teacher. Fiona stated that there were certain personal details she did not share with male students. Not every teacher had gender-based boundaries though; both Nancy and Lisa mentioned that they treated all their students the same and any boundaries they observed were applied to all of them regardless of gender.

How Social Media Affects Interaction with Students

Participants stated that social media had an impact on the ways they interacted with their students. They also found that their students were less intimidated by the teacher-student divide when interactions were online, and students were more willing to open up to them. In terms of specific social media usage, participants used Facebook, Instagram, or WhatsApp to connect with students. WhatsApp in particular emerged as a commonality among participants. Another impact of social media was that it increased the accessibility of their students.

A less intimidating environment. One effect that participants saw in students was how they communicated differently in real life versus on social media. In real life interactions, students were often "intimidated in face-to-face conversations" and were unable to get beyond the teacher-student divide: "When I'm talking to them personally, it's more on a teacher-student relationship. You cannot remove that." (Nancy). Conversely, many participants found that their students were more "daring" and able to communicate more freely via social media and "say what's going on."

> Sometimes, students are intimidated in class. But when it comes to social media, they are braver because it's faceless. They wouldn't say such things bravely in class. Some of them are introverted or intimidated or whatever, but they are able to talk on social media. They are more casual when it comes to social media, whereas in a formal setting they are more reserved. (Oscar)

Claire found that her students in the past were not as outgoing and she had to take the first step in connecting with them, though that has since changed given today's ubiquity of social media.

> The students now are more out there, so to speak. They see using social media as something that is normal, like you know, asking for a teacher's mobile number, for example. In the past they would feel a bit hesitant to ask for your mobile phone, but now even on the first day of school when you see them, they would straightaway ask you, "Oh Miss, can we get your mobile phone number? Because we want to create a Whatsapp group." (Claire)

The emergence of WhatsApp and direct communication. When I asked participants about the social media they used, WhatsApp stood out as a common platform: "WhatsApp has been used all around. I would say WhatsApp has been multipurpose and plays a huge part in teachers' lives now" (Shawn). While most of the participants used either Facebook or Instagram (or both) in varying capacities and degrees, WhatsApp was something that they all utilized regularly, and in many cases used the most, particularly in academic contexts. Of particular note was WhatsApp's 'groups' feature, where multiple people can be added into a group chat by an 'admin'; participants found that this aided organization, as they could group students by class or subject and tailor their interactions with each group accordingly. Another advantage of WhatsApp was that it increased the directness of communication with students. Facebook or Instagram allowed participants to connect with students on a general level in an online space within the context of a social network, and this often provided windows into one another's lives. In contrast, WhatsApp offered a more direct line between participants and their students for both academic and non-academic usage, and does not possess many of the extraneous features that often come with more 'mainstream' social media like Facebook or Instagram. Lisa mentioned that when she first started teaching in 2009, "we did not have WhatsApp back then" and she used Facebook with her students because it was the easiest way to communicate with them at the time.

However, WhatsApp had since supplanted Facebook as the preferred tool because it was "the easiest to use, rather than Facebook or Instagram." Oscar also used to utilize Facebook a lot with students, but saw it fall somewhat out of favor with parents and students due to "fears of children being misled". Over time he found students used Facebook less and less, and in searching for an alternative to ensure student engagement, WhatsApp emerged as an acceptable tool he could use to directly connect with both parents and students. Though he still used Facebook to build and maintain learning communities between classes, Oscar had since included WhatsApp as a common part of his workflow.

Increased accessibility. Social media usage also impacted the accessibility between teacher and student; that is, it allowed participants and students to connect outside of class or school time and "enabled a lot more interaction to go on". Many participants stated that social media was "convenient" and had "no time constraints", making it "easier to communicate" with their students. Academically, it increased the ease of sharing extra material and resources: "I can just share something that I find online instantly. Click of the button, here's the information, read it" (Lisa). Participants' also used social media to make various announcements and keep students informed regarding homework details, assignment submission dates, and class- or school-related activities.

> I've had occasions whereby I need to give last minute instructions for the following day and everything. So all I need is to send out to one or a group chat that I'm in. Once I get those students, they will spread the news to the other ones, so that means I can communicate last minute things and all that, or to remind them … what is needed when they come to school so they don't get into misconduct with the school management. (Paula)

Oscar found this accessibility important because it helped him to interact with his students outside of class time: "We only see them one hour per day in Form 6, so it's too limited a time for me to share everything I want to share with them." Tina felt that social media opened up opportunities to further the academic relationship between teachers and students, something that might not have been as readily available in the past:

> There's something to be said about having a good working relationship with your teacher. And back when social media wasn't so widespread, the only way for you to have that was

> to spend a lot of time with the teacher, whether in the classroom or outside of the classroom, to get more time beyond classroom time. That's not really possible for everyone. But with social media, there's a wide world opened up for you, because it's not limited to classroom time. It's not limited to the time you see the teacher inside the school, so there can be a lot of opportunities for you to build that link with that teacher. (Tina)

There were also moments when participants felt that their students struggled to understand particular concepts, needed more help in figuring out a tough question on an assignment, or simply needed to recall something shown in class. As their students were often online on different platforms, this allowed participants to reach out to them to further clarify something they might have taught in class, or answer questions that students had. Dan would post on social media many diagrams he had drawn in class for students to look at later. Oscar often found himself rewording and rephrasing concepts he had taught and sending them to students to clarify any queries they had.

However, there were drawbacks. While participants did see this increased accessibility as advantageous, some pointed out that it could be abused. Given that their students had an often direct line to them on one or more social media platforms, participants found that students — and sometimes even students' parents — would contact them "everywhere, anytime" at inconvenient moments, and even sometimes late at night. One such participant mentioned that he had to learn how to balance his home life and work life, as he often found himself torn between spending time with family and helping students who needed him.

> The disadvantage is, of course, sacrifice. Family and students, sometimes we do not know how to balance them. Sometimes some students that need help, even midnight they will just message you, "Sir, help me, help me please. I don't know how to do this question. I'm doing my revision." Stuff like that, because the next day is exams. Then they will message me, midnight, and sometimes if I'm still awake I will reply them. So I think that's a disadvantage. It steals away our private time with our family. (Dan)

Other participants were more strict with their time, and made it a point not to let students abuse this ease of contact. Zara felt her students might become too dependent "because some students tend to be over reliant if the teacher is too readily accessible." Paula wanted to make sure she

was able to guard her schedule, and decided to set a cutoff time, beyond which "I will only reply it the day after" if it was not urgent.

Another drawback regarding accessibility lay in how interactions with students could be "lopsided". Just because something could be shared with students did not mean they would all access or respond to it, whether this was due to lack of access or simple student apathy. Some participants were often unsure about whether their students got as much out of their online interactions as they expected or desired: "I don't even know if they worry about it or if they care that they participate" (Lisa). In comparing face-to-face class interactions with online interactions, Oscar said:

> Some people are active in just seeing the post. Some people are active because they respond. So in terms of the receptivity, it's not comprehensive. Not everybody accesses on an equal basis. I mean, those are individual constraints. We can't solve that issue, whereas in class it's face-to-face and everybody gets. How much they receive is another thing, but the thing is, the same information is put forward to everybody. That's a formal setting, you see, whereas this is informal. It does not reach everyone equally. (Oscar)

Thus, although social media made it easier to reach students, there were issues as well that participants had to learn to deal with.

Social Media and Classroom Dynamics

The main arena of the relationship between teacher and student is usually the classroom. As such, many of the participants were asked if their online interactions and evolving relationships with students affected the dynamics in their classrooms with regard to classroom atmosphere and student participation, how students were treated, and whether it affected student learning.

Class atmosphere and student participation. Participants agreed that one effect of increased online interaction is that the atmosphere in class changed: "Over time the atmosphere becomes less tense, more trusting" (Oscar). This resulted in students becoming more relaxed and willing to ask questions, contribute to class discussions, or participate in class activities, because "social media and all these things can come in to lighten the mood" (Zara). Claire stated that connecting with her students on social media made a difference:

> I used to have problems with a few of my students who didn't want to participate in class, who didn't put in any effort. But I sort of saw a difference once they started to add me on social media. (Claire)

She found that the students who connected with her on social media were "more willing to be open with you even if you don't ask them to, so you get that instant response that you want as a teacher when you're teaching." Paula discovered that, despite her reputation as "the nasty one that gives a whole lot of terror to kids", social media interactions had a positive effect in class; students were more ready to raise their hands when she asked if any of them had problems with the material, because they felt that "she's OK. She may be that but she's OK". In reminiscing about her past, Lisa stated that "student-teacher interaction I think has changed, because I remember when I was a student, it was just sitting in the classroom listening. That's it. It wasn't a two-way thing." However, Lisa noticed today that students who were more active online were often more active in class and she found that she spoke to them more. On the other hand, there were negatives effects as well; when Lisa shared material on social media, students who did not participate online "don't understand what we're talking about, so they get lost and then they become more quiet in class." Nancy also pointed out a downside, which is that the atmosphere in the classroom could become too relaxed; students at times did not listen in class because social media afforded them the opportunity to catch up later by asking their friends what they had missed or reading up on material the teacher posted online.

Treatment of students. Most of the participants stated that despite any interactions or closeness they may feel with students through social media, they made it a point not to let it affect the way they treated any of their students in class. Oscar stated that he appreciated their online participation but never put down anyone else who did not participate as much.

> We have to give them positive reinforcement, so … the weak students do not get demoralized. This is the kind of atmosphere I try to create. Likewise, those who are active in social media and all that, I do appreciate their participation but they are not given any extra attention or extra compliments beyond that. (Oscar)

Fiona stated that she did feel a connection with some of her students. Like Tina, she used an analogy of "breaking a barrier, that wall between your student and you." However, she stated she tried not to let that affect the way she treated students she did not connect online with because

she felt it would not be fair. On the other hand, Nancy stated that because she understood some of her students better through her online interactions with them, she knew of problems and issues that they had and tried to give them more attention in class or spend more time to ensure they knew how to perform tasks. As a result, she wondered whether some of her other students felt like they received less attention.

> So I have a tendency of teaching more to this side because I know they have problems. … I teach them more because I know their parents will not help them when they go home. So I need to teach them in class how to do this, how to do that, which is affecting also the other students maybe, because maybe I don't give as much time to them as compared to the other students. (Nancy)

Thus, while participants endeavored to treat all their students the same regardless of who they connected with online, there were a couple of participants who wondered if it affected their students nonetheless.

Student learning. Most participants saw an impact on their students' learning. Tina felt that social media opened up new avenues for all parties involved to work together in teaching and learning: "Sometimes you and the students are co-constructing knowledge together, so you really need to have a platform for that to happen." Other participants seemed to echo this — both Shawn and Lisa found that many of their students had better understanding and would "catch on faster" in class. They knew what their teacher was talking about because they had seen what had been shared or discussed online or had asked their teacher questions online prior to class. Zara asserted that sharing resources online with students sometimes made learning more efficient because students are "on their phones all the time. So sometimes when they want to revise, they don't need to have a paper. They can just take a look at summarized notes in PDF in their phones." Oscar often used social media to clarify any confusion he might have noticed in his students, "intensifying what they learned in class." In addition, although he consciously made an effort to treat all his students equally, Oscar recognized that students who participated actively online often benefited more, while those who did not join in and add to the discussion were "compromising" because they lacked that "additional input".

> When a question is asked, I don't answer. I let the other members respond. I wait for a few answers to come in. Then I respond accordingly by crediting them for their

> viewpoints and then I will tell them that it could also be seen this way. So, obviously those who participate are benefiting more and they are gaining more confidence, self-confidence. They are gaining more insight into it as opposed to those who are not participating. (Oscar)

Social media interactions also seemed to have an effect on students' enthusiasm when it came to learning. Claire observed that "with the availability of social media, it sort of enables you to get students to learn more willingly." She felt that she did not have to force them, as "they're more willing to put effort into their own learning." Tina hazarded a guess as to why this was:

> Even for me, if I were a student, I would be more willing to learn if you know the person behind the desk. … You'd be more invested in learning. … Maybe it's just me but I think because, "Oh, this teacher, he's actually fun outside the classroom." Even though the subject is dry, I would be willing to give them the benefit of the doubt. (Tina)

Although some participants stated they did not see any major changes or improvements in the way their students learned, they did acknowledge small advances here and there. Dan said he saw a slight improvement and that the students who interacted with him on social media usually did better in their exams as "compared to those who shy away with me." Paula stated that her students with online interaction "find that their doubts are cleared up maybe a day earlier or a couple days earlier than the others because they have the direct line and they choose to ask." She also discovered that many of her students "learn by proxy"; students who did not connect with her online would often simply ask those who did, thus gaining any extra information and learning through them. Other times, the online-interaction students would approach her to discuss something, and the non-online-interaction students would "tag along". Thus she felt she was able to reach all her students, whether directly or indirectly, and "at least, come what may, everybody learns."

On the other hand, social media usage is not always a boon and could distract students and cause them to digress. Paula emphasized that social media could often diminish time spent on academics because students today "juggle" their real and social media lives as they get "carried away" trying to build popularity with friends and followers. Zara felt that students were "quite hooked" on the Internet and social media, and she wanted to prevent them from using her

to justify wasting time online: “I don’t want to let it be an excuse for them to say that, ‘Oh, because my [Science] teacher says I have to go online to see all these things. I have to be there’.”

Surveys

Surveys were digitized using Google Forms, and the resulting data were entered in a spreadsheet in Google Sheets. The Explore function in Google Sheet was used to analyze and visualize the data to better aid comprehension and examination. Out of approximately 110 surveys distributed to four schools, 63 responses were received. Out of these responses, 47 were female and 16 were male. Ages of respondents ranged from 23 to 61, though the majority of respondents ranged from 30 to 40 years of age (Figure 6).

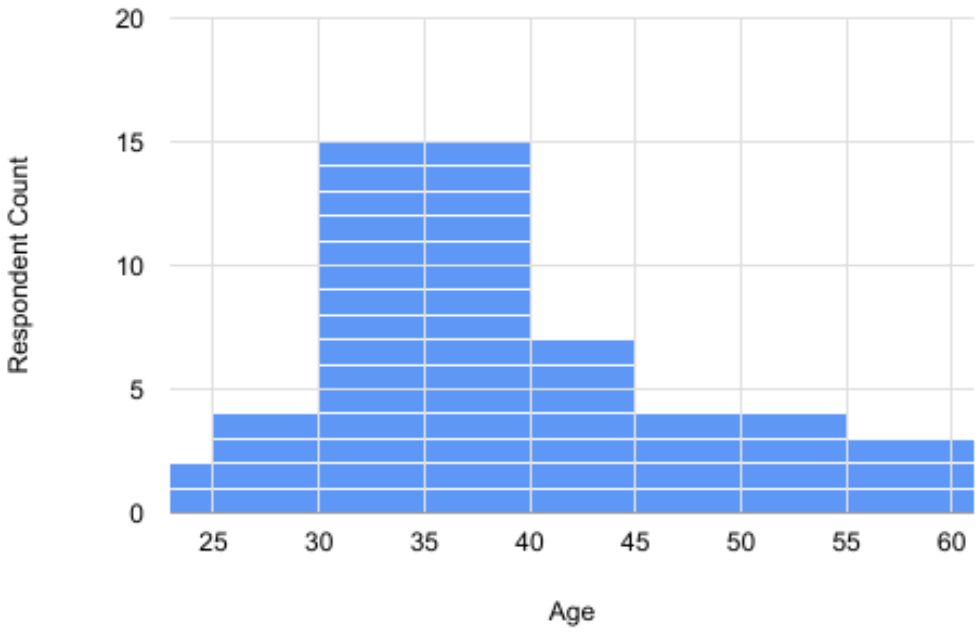

Figure 6. Age of Respondents

The approximate number of years that respondents had taught varied widely from 1 to 38, with the majority of them having taught for 10 to 15 years (Figure 7).

Frequency of digital communication tool usage. Respondents were tasked to consider their usage of nine different digital communication tools and rate on a Likert scale how often they used each tool. These tools were Texting (SMS/Whatsapp/etc.), Email, Blogs, Discussion Boards/Forums, Facebook, Twitter, Vine, Instagram, and Snapchat. Out of these choices, the most popular tools seemed to be Texting, Facebook, and Email. Instagram seemed to be a bit

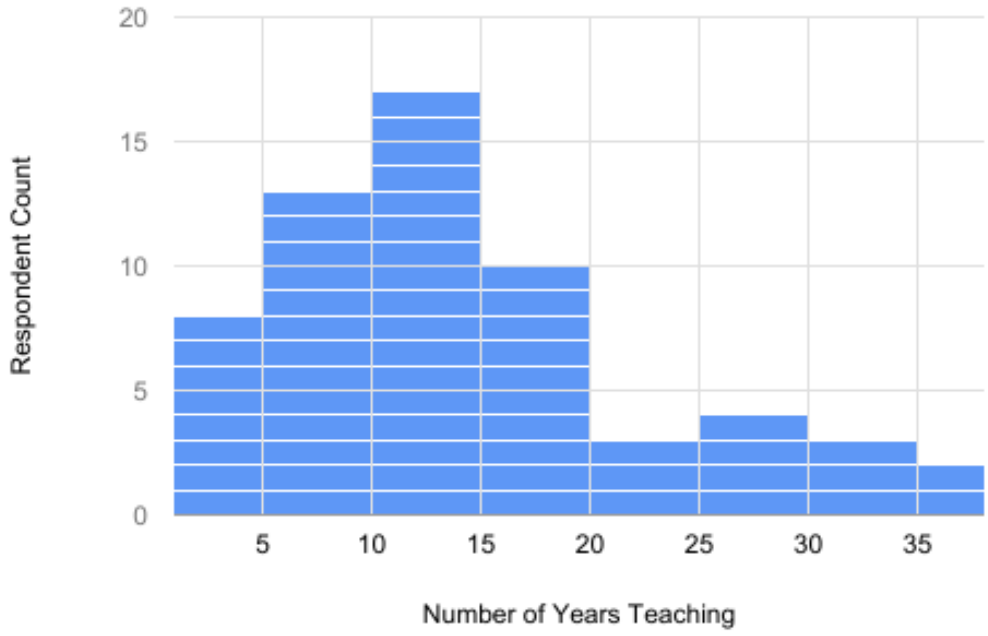

Figure 7. Approximate Number of Years Teaching

divisive; though most respondents did not use it at all, it did have a number of loyal adherents. Discussion Boards/Forums and Blogs saw low to moderate usage, while Snapchat, Twitter, and Vine were the least used, each gaining 80% or more responses of 'Not at all'.

Texting was the most commonly used tool across all schools, with almost 60% of respondents stating they used it all the time, and remaining respondents selecting either 'Sometimes', 'Regularly', or 'Often'. No one selected 'Rarely' or 'Not at all' (Figure 8).

The next most commonly used tool was Facebook, with about 35% of respondents stating they used it all the time. About 27% stated they used it 'Regularly' to 'Often', and a further remaining 24% selecting 'Rarely' or 'Sometimes' (Figure 9).

Next was Email. While only 19% stated they used it 'All the time', over 50% said they used it 'Regularly' or 'Often', with a further 19% saying they used it 'Sometimes' (Figure 10).

Instagram seemed to find somewhat of a niche, with about 20% of respondents saying they used it all the time. However, over 50% stated they did not use it at all. A further 19% stated they used it 'Sometimes' to 'Rarely' (Figure 11).

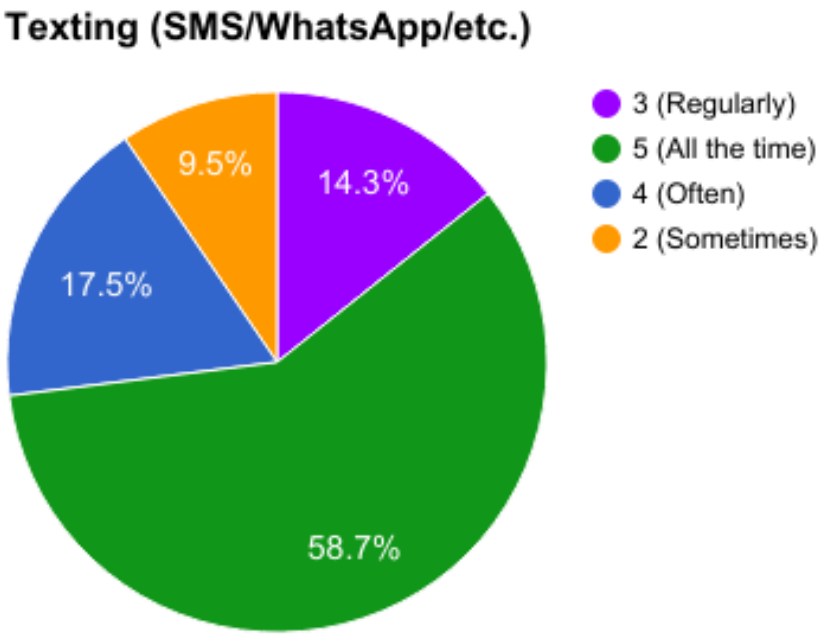

Figure 8. Usage of Texting (SMS/WhatsApp/etc.)

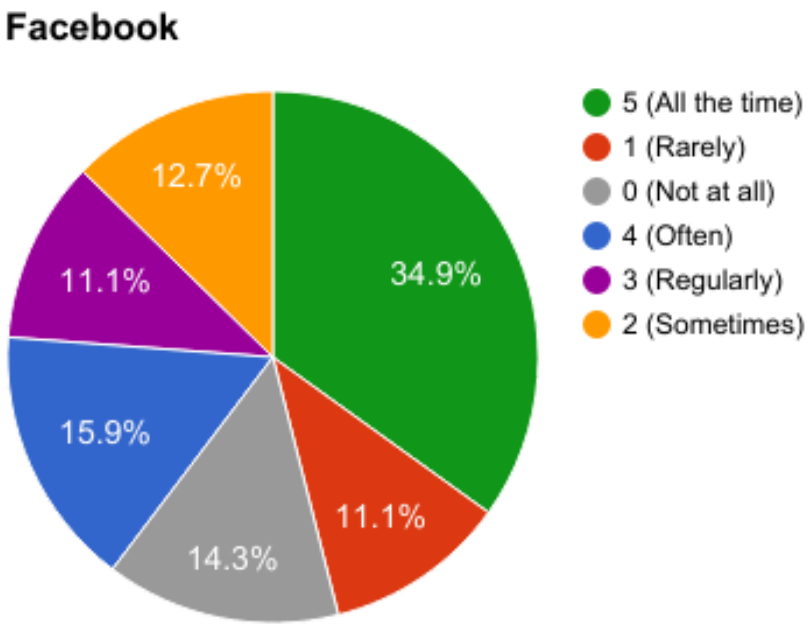

Figure 9. Usage of Facebook

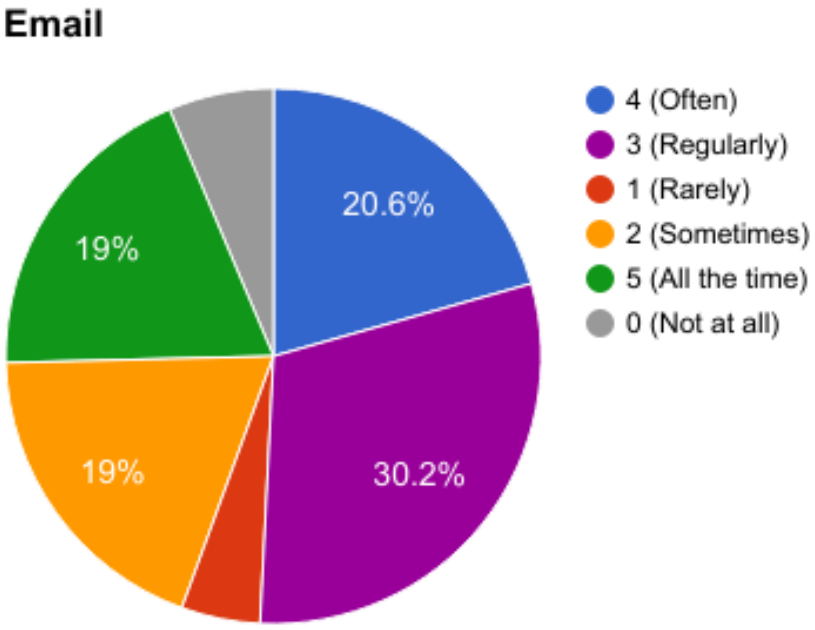

Figure 10. Usage of Email

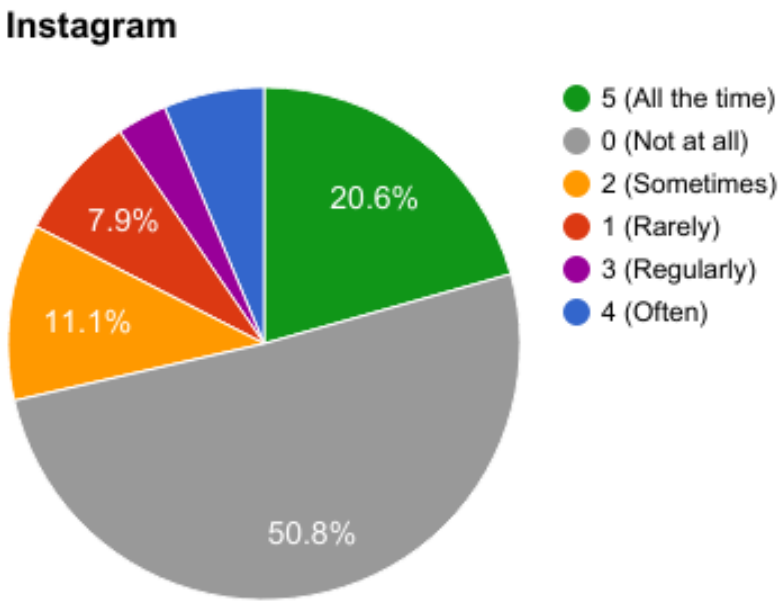

Figure 11. Usage of Instagram

Importance of Social Media. Respondents were asked to rate on a Likert scale how important social media was for certain activities. These activities consisted of 'Keeping in touch with friends', 'Reconnecting with people I have lost touch with', 'Communicating with students about class work or projects', 'Interacting with students about non-academic related activities', 'Letting others know what is happening in my life', and 'Keeping up with current events and activities'. Out of these, both 'Keeping in touch with friends' and 'Keeping up with current events and activities' were rated by a majority of respondents as 'Very important'. 'Reconnecting with people' was shown to be 'Moderately important', while 'Letting others know what is happening in my life' was shown to have little to moderate importance.

As for the student-focused questions, the majority of respondents considered social media to be 'Moderately important' to 'Very important' for communicating with students about class work or projects (Figure 12).

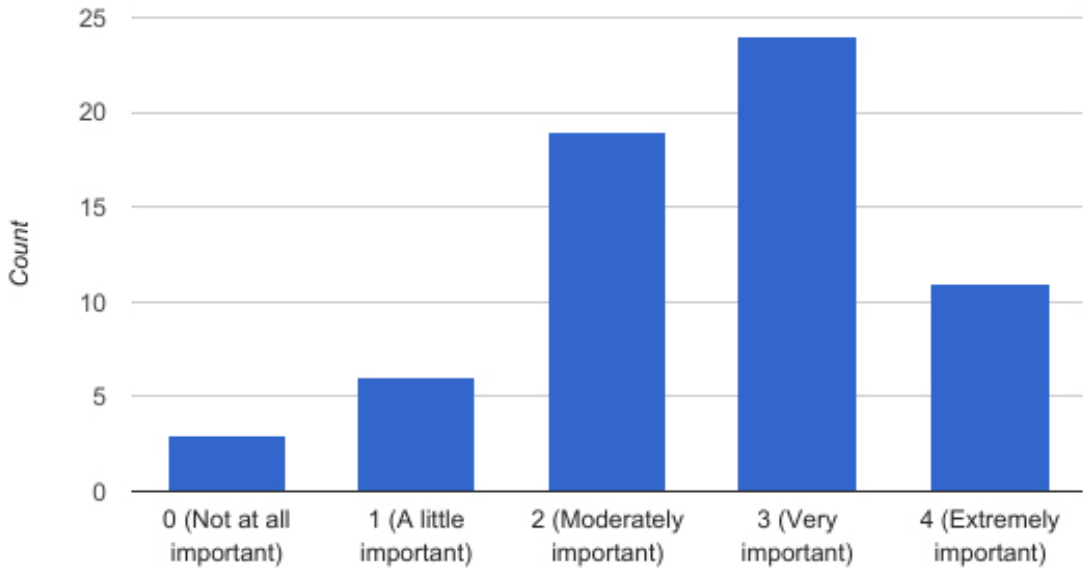

Figure 12. Importance of Social Media in Communicating with Students about Class Work

Social media was also 'Moderately important' for interacting with students about non-academic related activities (Figure 13).

Strengths and challenges of digital communication tools (DCTs). Respondents were also asked to write down what they thought were strengths and challenges of DCTs for education. One of the most common strengths brought up was how communication and interaction between

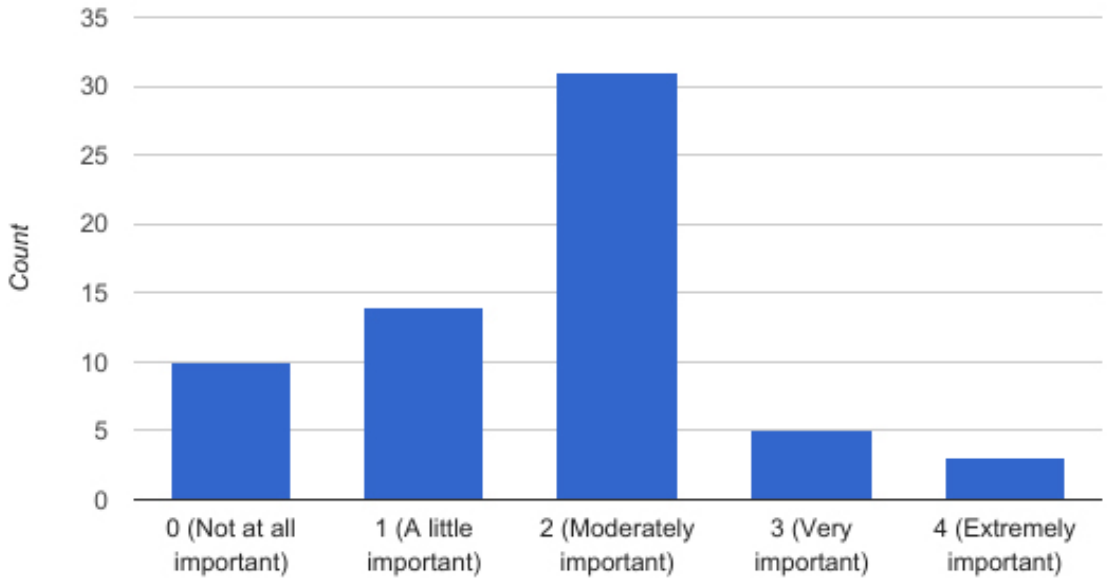

Figure 13. Importance of Social Media in Interacting with Students about Non-academic Related Activities

teachers and students were affected. DCTs strengthened teacher-student communication and gave teachers more in common with students, improving the teacher-student relationship. Reaching students was much easier, and both teachers and students could stay in contact because these tools did not have time constraints and could be used anytime, anywhere. In terms of academic uses, DCTs improved the dissemination of relevant information to students, whether it be announcements regarding class or school, providing instant solutions and feedback to questions students posed, or sharing resources and notes and thereby lowering costs by saving paper. It was felt that this also promoted independent learning, increasing efficiency and productivity by letting students continue their studies at home and advance at their own pace. Students could discuss topics among themselves, sharing information and materials before submitting work or tasks online. DCTs were also held to be student-friendly as students feel a sense of familiarity with the technologies. One way this manifested was in encouraging students to contribute to discussions, particularly shy or quiet students who could participate online because it was “faceless”. Despite these advantages, respondents pointed out a number of challenges as well. While communication was improved, it was sometimes easier to explain certain topics or ideas in real life, rather than online where it could be difficult to clarify one’s intent or where the tone of a message could be misinterpreted. Some respondents also found it

difficult to fully "switch off from work" as there were times when parents or students contacted them at inopportune times, misusing the enhanced accessibility. Academically, respondents were concerned that DCTs distracted students and hindered learning, causing a lack of interest and lessening students' use of critical thinking skills. Moreover, overuse of DCTs could lead to a loss of communication skills and reduced confidence as students become less socialized and neglect regular face-to-face human interaction. Also, while having a wealth of resources online might seem like an advantage, it could often be difficult to know which were reliable and not filled with erroneous information. Having all the answers online could also encourage plagiarism. Respondents also expressed safety concerns; many online arenas lacked appropriate supervision and students could abuse or misuse media. Worse, they could be exposed to spam, inappropriate material, or become victims of cyber crime. Another point of concern was that the level of access to DCTs could be disproportionate; not all students had Wi-Fi, Internet connections, computers, or smartphones. And even for those that did, their levels of familiarity and knowledge of these tools varied and it could be difficult to use these DCTs and ensure a successful lesson at the same time. In terms of connecting with students, some respondents stated that the informal contexts in DCTs could change the relational dynamics between teacher and student, prompting students to cross the teacher-student barrier.

Respondents' personal experiences using DCTs in education included using WhatsApp to create class groups to disseminate work or resources, keep students and parents informed about school activities, clarify doubts and provide feedback about lessons and homework, or answer questions from shy students; using group texts as a forum for discussion and suggestions during training for competitions or debates; messaging students encouragement and advice prior to examinations or tests, particularly weaker students; using apps to entertain students on long field trips; and sharing knowledge or news relevant to a subject. One respondent attempted to use Twitter as a means of communication and task management, but cited "lack of familiarity" as a hindrance that stopped her using it.

Besides providing nominal insights into which DCTs Bruneian teachers use and what they use them for, these findings are in line with what was found during interviews; participants cited WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram as commonly used tools in both their academic and personal interactions with students. Moreover, many of the strengths and challenges listed by teachers in the open-ended section of the surveys are similar to the categories and themes that

emerged during interviews, such as accessibility, effects on interactions and relationships, and relational boundaries. Thus, findings between the surveys and interviews are consistent and demonstrate that participants are not unusual in their social media usage or their perceptions of how their academic and personal relationships with students are affected.

Summary

In this chapter, I reported and explored the findings for both qualitative and quantitative data sets. I discussed participant reflections of their digital native trait comparisons with their students, any similarities or differences they saw with them, and how it affected their teaching. This also helped to frame the interview data, which showed that social media affected interactions with students, increasing the ability to reach students and helping them be less intimidated. However, drawbacks included the abuse of teacher's availability, and an imbalance in student access and accessibility. Online interactions also had an impact on classroom dynamics, leading to a more relaxed class atmosphere and increased student participation and openness, though this could sometimes cause students not to pay attention in class or not understand what was being discussed if they did not participate. Student learning was also affected; feedback and solutions could be easily shared with students to clarify their doubts and intensify their learning through this additional input. Other students could also learn from those who connected with the teacher. Digression was a danger however, as students could be distracted by the Internet and social media. In terms of relationship-building, the sharing of personal information allowed teachers and students to get to know one another better on a personal level and change their perceptions of one another, in turn allowing them to move beyond teacher and student into more complex relationship roles like mentorship or parental personas. However, this did not diminish the importance of educational, professional, and cultural or religious boundaries to the teacher-student relationship.

The survey data showed that Texting, Facebook, and Email were commonly used digital communication tools. Instagram also had niche usage. Keeping in touch with friends and keeping up with current events and activities were considered very important uses of social media. For teachers, these tools were also used to communicate with their students for both academic and non-academic related activities. There were a number of strengths and challenges of digital communication tools pointed out that encompassed the effects on teacher-student

communication; accessibility and information dissemination; student learning, participation, and communication and social skills; resource management and discernment; student safety; disproportionate access to technology; and the relational dynamics in the teacher-student relationship. These qualitative findings were also related back to the interview data, framing it and providing weight to what participants had said during interviews.

In Chapter 5, the patterns explored here are compared to the existing literature, which leads to a discussion of the conclusions and implications of these results with regard to the research questions posed.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to examine the impacts of social media on the teacher-student relationship, as well as its impact on the roles of teachers. The research questions guiding this study were as follows:

1. **How do Bruneian teachers perceive social media is changing their relationships with students?** This question involved teacher perspectives on the effects that social media interactions had on their relationships with their students both inside and outside the classroom, how those changes had come about, and ultimately what this meant for classroom dynamics and learning in general.
2. **How do Bruneian teachers perceive social media is affecting their roles as teachers?** This question sought to examine teacher reflections on their roles of teachers and what effect their social media relationships with students had on those roles, whether inside or outside the classroom.

Analysis of the overall data yielded three major themes in which social media affected the relationships and roles between teacher and students in one aspect or another: relationship-building, teacher-student interactions, and classroom dynamics. In this chapter, I discuss how these themes address and relate to the research questions posed in this study.

Overall, this study supports the assertion that the teacher-student relationship is a crucial element in student learning and makes inferences as to how it affects other academic elements in that relationship. While previous research acknowledges these connections, this current study indicates that social media can be a useful and efficient tool in furthering the interpersonal aspects of the teacher-student relationship, with the ultimate end goal of positive impacts on student motivation, learning, and meaningful academic and personal connections. These findings are also compared with previously reviewed literature, highlighting similarities or differences found. The conclusions in this study provide implications for those using digital tools and practicing in the field of education, as well as suggestions for other researchers to expand or extend on this study to further the body of knowledge of educational research in these areas.

Relationship-Building

The teacher-student relationship is a complex thing. It begins as the teacher and her students meet in the classroom, where their relationships exist at the sociological level. The teacher is at the front as a person whose role is to help students gain knowledge and also to teach them how to use that knowledge by providing scaffolding and guidance. She is there to facilitate learning as best she can to ensure that her students get the most out of the information they take in. Students, for their part, are to try and work with the teacher to navigate these informational pathways and make sense of what they're learning. However, over time it seems that their professional and personal lives overlap in some aspects or others. This was reflected in this study's findings, as teachers discussed how both their academic and personal relationships with students grew and developed together, and stated that social media was important for connecting both academically and personally with students. This addresses the first research question of how social media is affecting the teacher-student relationship. The use of social media was seen as a common tool that teachers used to connect with their students outside of class time, and they held it up as a way to get to know students and build common ground with them. This common ground became a foundation on which they developed the interpersonal aspects of these relationships beyond just the content that they taught in class. The overlap of the professional and the personal was discussed by Uitto (2012), where she examined the intertwining of the personal and professional aspects of teacher-student relationships. She reached out to people to write about their teachers and share what they remembered as students, and the writings she collected demonstrated that students knew about their teachers' personal lives. This sometimes happened through direct communication where a teacher would discuss her experiences with students, but students would also often simply see a teacher's personal life in one form or another over the course of time. She also described the development of the relationship outside school contexts, and the development of teacher-student relationships into personal friendships. The findings in this current study seem to echo Uitto's results; through social media, the teachers in this current study found that both the professional and personal aspects of their relationships with their students intertwined. Social media facilitated the disclosure of personal information, and students got to know their teachers over time as they approached teachers and asked personal questions, or simply were allowed access to their teacher's personal 'world' on their social media accounts. Some teachers' relationships with their students also developed into lifelong personal

friendships, particularly once students had graduated and the teacher-student barrier had been removed. In comparison to Uitto's study, this study suggests that social media allows the professional-personal relationship overlap to happen more, given the increased opportunities for the sharing of personal details between teacher and student.

In considering the development of the teacher-student relationship, Dobransky and Frymier (2004) found that students who engaged in out-of-class communication (OCC) with their instructors reported a different type of relationship with their instructor than those who did not. Students engaging in OCC described greater perceptions of intimacy and shared control. Dobransky and Frymier held that this reinforced the hypothesis that the teacher-student relationship is an interpersonal one, and while not all OCC is interpersonal in nature, it provides an opportunity for this development to happen. This current study would seem to support this hypothesis, as teachers reported increased intimacy with students whom they had online interactions with. As they engaged in this online OCC through social media, they got to know one another and their relationships were perceived to become more interpersonal.

The findings in this study also address the second research question of how social media affects the roles of teachers. As their perceptions of one another changed and relationships evolved, teachers began to see opportunities to reach out to students beyond the classroom environment and beyond the fundamental purposes of the 'teacher' and 'student' labels. This is consistent with Dobransky and Frymier's (2004) assertion that the intersection of the professional and personal aspects of the teacher-student relationship can cause a shift from the sociological roles of 'teacher' and 'student' to more complex roles. As a result, teacher and student often begin to communicate on a more psychological and interpersonal level, and this often takes place outside the classroom when teachers and students can communicate one-on-one. As this current study suggests, as time went on and teachers and students engaged in OCC online, they began to look beyond sociological roles and were better able to see one another as individuals with pasts, presents, and futures, and lives outside the classroom, with thoughts, feelings, and opinions of their own. Teachers were able to leverage the strengths of social media and pursue deeper connections with students, adding layers to their existing 'teacher' roles and taking on further responsibilities as facilitators, coaches, counselors, mentors, familial proxies, and eventually, lifelong friends.

The ‘digital commons’ (Schwartz, 2009) of various social media connections between teachers and students also regularly required that teachers set certain boundaries on their interactions with students, particularly in cases where the professional teacher-student boundary needed be respected. Teachers in this study used digital tools like Facebook, email, and instant messaging to supplement their teaching, organization, and relationship management, and they were acutely aware of boundaries that need to be adhered to. While many of them saw their interpersonal relationships with students as providing certain advantages and benefits, they did not want to build on those relationships at the expense of their roles as teachers and educators, and saw the need to maintain the professionalism of the teacher-student boundary for the sake of classroom authority, discipline, and control. These results are consistent with previous research that discusses the relevance and appropriateness of increased social media interaction between teacher and student, as well as the boundaries and barriers that should be respected (Bongartz et al., 2011; Cain et al., 2013; Karl & Peluchette, 2011; Schwartz, 2009; Seidel, 2009; Teclehaimanot & Hickman, 2011). One unique element present in this current study was that of cultural and religious gender-based boundaries. Only the study by Teclehaimanot and Hickman (2011) looked at gender as a variable, finding that male students tended to consider the presence of faculty on Facebook more acceptable than female students did. They speculated that this was probably due to a limitation in their selected sample of instructors, which consisted of only male faculty. They further acknowledged that these general differences did not mean that every male or female student would feel the same way, and that it was important for teachers to be aware of the individual differences in students and what was expected of both parties. In comparison, teachers in this current study acknowledged the pre-existing expectations and boundaries inherent in the cultural and religious environment of Brunei. This was evident in the way these expectations and boundaries affected both the academic and interpersonal aspects of relationships with their students. Thus, these findings add an extra element to the previously mentioned studies and present a unique perspective on gender-based boundaries, offering a glimpse at the teacher-student relationship through cultural and religious lenses.

Teacher-Student Interaction

An important aspect of any relationship is communication and interaction, and the same is true for the teacher-student relationship. Interactions between teachers and students can have

effects on other aspects of their relationship as a whole, regardless of whether that communication is academic, personal, or both. Therefore, in considering the question of how social media affects teachers' relationships with students, it would be useful to discuss how it influences interactions between them. The connection between relationships and interaction was discussed by Frymier and Houser (2000), who stated that the teacher-student relationship is content-driven but also relational, and both content expertise and personal communication between teacher and student are crucial to effective teaching. They further held that the formation of interpersonal relationships led to greater trust and respect between teachers and students, which in turn allowed students to ask "stupid" or risky questions by providing a safe learning environment where students do not have to fear being seen by their peers as foolish. In this current study, teachers utilized social media to improve and maintain both their academic and personal communication with students, and this impacted teacher-student interaction by providing a less intimidating environment, more directness of communication, and increased accessibility between teacher and student. In addition, teachers found that social media allowed students, particularly the shy or quiet ones, to be more open and able to connect with their teachers. An example of providing a safe space for learning was seen in teachers' use of direct online communication through texting and instant messaging services like WhatsApp. The group chats in WhatsApp provided a collective learning environment for each class, while one-on-one chat options allowed students to directly approach teachers if they desired to seek aid away from the eyes of peers. Thus, the findings in this current study posit social media as a useful and flexible avenue that promotes improved interpersonal relationships based on mutual respect and trust between teachers and students, and provides opportunities for the formation of a safe and less intimidating learning environment. Tangentially, this brings to mind the further question of which comes first; that is, does an improved interpersonal relationship provide a safe learning environment, or does the presence of a safe learning environment allow the development of an improved interpersonal relationship? Some teachers in this study found that online interactions with students often began academically, and over time some students opened up about personal details or asked personal questions. Other teachers discovered that getting to know their students online led to better atmospheres both in the classroom and on social media. Thus, these findings would suggest that regardless of which comes first, the process is cyclical; better relationships lead to safer learning environments, which in turn lead to better relationships, and so on.

Moreover, as teachers and students today have more open access to each other outside the confines of the classroom, this enables the extension of the teaching and learning environment. This assertion would seem to be connected to Dobransky and Frymier's (2004) discussion of out-of-class communication (OCC). Interestingly, while the OCC reported in this current study matched Dobransky and Frymier's definitions as "interactions outside the formal classroom that may be initiated by students or faculty" (p. 213), one notable difference is that Dobransky and Frymier characterized OCC as primarily face-to-face and often relatively infrequent. This is not too surprising given that their study was conducted in 2004 when social media as we know it today did not exist — Facebook and Twitter launched in 2006, WhatsApp in 2009, and Instagram in 2010. As such, face-to-face interactions were probably the most common form of OCC at the time. To reiterate how one participant in this current study put it, "the only way … was to spend a lot of time with the teacher, whether in the classroom or outside of the classroom, to get more time beyond classroom time." However, social media today has allowed much more OCC to take place without time or distance as major constraints. Thus, the findings in this current study indicate that social media provides teachers and students with additional platforms for OCC beyond face-to-face interactions, and thus the findings extend and reinforce the idea of OCC as a space for both safe learning and interpersonal relationship development.

This also possibly addresses an earlier query that emerged in Chapter 2 of this study during the literature review. Postiglione and Tan (2007) contended that teachers in Brunei have "little autonomy and professional freedom. They cannot with impunity criticize the education system, education policies, or curriculum. The teacher is not a change agent" (p.31) and is expected to adhere to school procedures and policies, which leads to a focus on learning as "the transmission of standardized accepted sanitized knowledge" (p. 27). As a result, there is often less room for intellectual creativity and curiosity outside pre-determined curricula, a situation compounded by the examination-oriented focus on results and grades. One possible impact of this could be the lack of student interaction, where many students choose to stay quiet because the atmosphere does not always promote boldness or independence in seeking knowledge beyond what is being transmitted. Thus, given the tendency for classroom culture in Brunei to focus more on content than the relationship between teacher and student, the findings in this current study would suggest that OCC serves to bridge perceived gaps in these relationships.

Using social media for OCC can enable teachers to interact with their students both academically and personally, outside the confines and limitations of a more teacher-centered classroom.

Classroom Dynamics

A teacher's role, first and foremost, is in the classroom. They are tasked to educate their students using the tools at their disposal, aiding the mental growth and maturity of the next generation as best they can. As such, the primary relationship between them is that of educator and student, and the primary space in which these relationships exist and grow is the classroom. A discussion of classroom dynamics involves both research questions insofar as both the relationships and roles between teachers and students can impact and be impacted by what occurs in the classroom. The findings in this study showed that the usage of social media affected classroom atmosphere, student participation, how students were treated, and student learning. These findings help corroborate past research in classroom dynamics, and also add an insight on how this might play out at different educational levels. For example, Bolkan and Goodboy (2009) examined how a teacher's transformational leadership affected student learning, student participation, and teacher credibility. They explained that transformational leadership comprises: charisma, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation. Charisma involves subordinates' belief, devotion, admiration, and trust in their leader. Individualized consideration involves leaders treating each subordinate according to their individual needs, characteristics, and capabilities. Intellectual stimulation involves how leaders stimulate subordinates by reflecting on ideas they had not otherwise considered. They discovered that transformational leadership in the classroom did indeed have positive effects on how students learned and participated, as well as on teacher credibility. This current study suggests that social media usage allowed teachers to demonstrate elements of transformational leadership outside the classroom: developing academic and interpersonal aspects of their relationships through social media enabled teachers to display charisma, leading to their students showing devotion and admiration for them; direct online communication let teachers demonstrate individual consideration in how different students' individual needs were often considered; and teachers were able to practice intellectual stimulation by using social media to continue and intensify learning and push students to consider topics deeper and on different levels. Although these social media interactions took place outside the classroom, there were real world effects within

the classroom itself. Teachers reported increased trust from their students and less tension in the classroom atmosphere, which in turn led to higher student participation in class discussions and activities. This ultimately had a positive impact on student learning as students gained additional input and feedback and seemed to put more effort into their own education. The findings in this current study are also consistent with Frisby and Martin's (2010) study that examined how interpersonal relationships in the classroom impacted student behavioral and learning outcomes. They concluded that perceived instructor-student rapport is a significant predictor of student participation and learning. These findings are also in line with Duncan and Barczyk's (2013) study that looked at how Facebook facilitates the building and maintenance of communities of practice, and how it fosters collaboration and interaction and enhances student learning. Some teachers in this current study maintained communities of practice on Facebook and WhatsApp for each of their classes or student groups, using them to encourage learning and supplement what was taught in the classroom.

Similar to what Jones (2008) found examining the positive effects of out-of-class support (OCS) on student motivation to learn, this current study provides further evidence that suggests OCS is a useful tool to help students cope with academic obstacles and pressures they might encounter. Teachers used social media to help allay student apprehension, clear up misunderstandings, clarify school-related information, and provide further opportunities for learning by providing extra resources and more instantaneous and accessible feedback. These support behaviors seemed to have positive effects on students' desire to put effort into their own learning. Furthermore, this current study also supports Jones' contention that sex does not have a significant effect on OCS outcomes. Although teachers did discuss an awareness of the cultural and religious boundaries governing their interactions and personal self-disclosure with students of the opposite sex, these only seemed to apply to the interpersonal aspects of their relationships. They stated that academic support was available to all their students regardless of gender.

However, there were some teachers in this study who felt it was important to be cautious when using social media as a tool. Beyond the tension present when it came to crossing appropriate teacher-student boundaries, they held that using social media in an academic context did not always lead to improved student learning outcomes because it could at times be an unnecessary distraction. Because some of their students already found it difficult to self-monitor their own social media usage, these teachers did not want to exacerbate the situation by making

social media a mainstay in their teaching workflow or in class-related matters beyond what was necessary. This is consistent with Wise, Skues, and Williams' (2011) anecdotal evidence that social media could be distracting and intrusive, particularly in terms of academic engagement, and that educators need to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of any digital tools they utilize with students.

Summary

The themes in this section were used to focus this study and were discussed in relation to the two research questions that guided the study.

In the first theme of relationship-building, teachers discussed how social media usage played a part in the overlap of their academic and personal relationships, by facilitating out-of-class communication (OCC). As teachers' and students' perceptions changed over time, the role of each teacher evolved beyond its fundamental educational purpose, and opportunities to explore other supportive and empathetic roles emerged. This allowed teachers to build more complex and meaningful relationships with students as they exchanged personal information and details about themselves and saw different sides of one another within the frames of their social media accounts. However, teachers were clear that this did not negate the need to respect the professional, cultural, and religious boundaries between them.

The second theme discussed how social media also affected the teacher-student relationship in terms of its interactions. Teachers' social media usage allowed them to increase OCC to boost their accessibility to students beyond the teacher-centered classroom. It also enabled them to promote safe learning environments online for all students, while individual students could still communicate directly with them. This helped them build respect and trust, and further improved their relationships with their students.

The third theme's discussion of classroom dynamics involved both the relationships and roles between teachers and students. Teachers who used social media reported positive effects on classroom atmosphere, student participation, how students were treated, and student learning. Teachers were able to demonstrate transformational leadership outside the classroom and develop both the academic and interpersonal aspects of their relationships through social media, which improved classroom atmosphere and student learning and participation. Providing out-of-class support (OCS) through online interactions helped alleviate pressure and stress on students and helped them overcome obstacles, which promoted self-directed learning. Conversely, some

teachers pointed out the need for caution as social media did have its drawbacks; it was important for teachers to be prudent when weighing the pros and cons of using social media with their students.

Overall, the themes that emerged from the data painted a picture of social media's impact on the relationships and roles between teacher and student in both academic and interpersonal ways.

Social Penetration Theory: Building on a Framework

Reviewing the research literature resulted in the formation of the two research questions on which this study was based. As detailed earlier, these two questions were concerned with the impacts of social media on the teacher-student relationship and what this might mean for classroom dynamics and learning, as well as the impacts of social media on the roles of teachers. With these questions in mind, Social Penetration Theory (SPT), devised by Altman and Taylor (1973), was selected as the conceptual framework used to study these impacts, particularly the element of self-disclosure and its effects on the teachers' relationships and roles with students. SPT has been used in a number of varied research contexts including business ethics (Baack et al., 2000), Internet dating relationships (Gibbs et al., 2006), online personal information management in interpersonal communication (Panos, 2014), and self-disclosure among bloggers (Tang & Wang, 2012). Studies in educational research have examined instructor self-disclosure and student evaluations (Lannutti & Strauman, 2006; Zhai, 2012).

Social Penetration Theory: Aspects and Frames

With regard to self-disclosure and the teacher-student relationship, the findings of this study support and extend what was found in previous research with regard to relational turning points (Docan-Morgan, 2011), teacher credibility (Johnson, 2011; Mazer et al., 2009), and student evaluations of the instructor (Lannutti & Strauman, 2006; Zhai, 2012). With the exception of the two studies by Lannutti and Strauman and Zhai, the other studies did not discuss SPT or use it as part of their research framework. However, their focus on self-disclosure is pertinent to this current study. As such, each of these studies are discussed and compared to findings in this current study.

Docan-Morgan (2011) examined teacher perspectives and experiences on relational turning points with their students. They discovered that "many of the most significant moments

in instruction occur during one-on-one, interpersonal exchanges with students" (p. 42), and one of the main factors that affected relational turning points was self-disclosure. This current study hints at similar effects; while most of the teachers did not directly mention specific relational turning points, findings suggest that teachers' social media usage with students led to moments when some relationships shifted in different ways. Some teachers found that being available online to answer students' academic questions also provided windows for some students to approach them with more personal queries or to seek advice on personal issues. In addition, allowing students 'into their world' by becoming 'friends' on social media allowed students to gain new perspectives on their teacher. These interactions and connections often resulted in a shift toward a closer and more personal connection, which in turn affected other aspects and facets of the relationship. In terms of stage progression, while this study did not conduct a systematic examination of the stages of self-disclosure in SPT, the findings suggests that social media enabled many teachers' relationships with students to move past superficial topics and purely academic discussions (the orientation stage), to more casual friendships where where they were able to share slightly more in-depth ideas, opinions, and attitudes (the exploratory-affective stage). There is also evidence to suggest that some teachers even managed to become close friends with a few of their students, where they could share more personal and private matters, thoughts, and opinions with one another (the affective stage).

Mazer et al. (2009) discussed how teacher self-disclosure on Facebook could positively affect students' perceptions of teacher credibility, defined as "the degree to which students perceive the instructor's level of competence, trustworthiness, and caring" (p. 176). Johnson (2011) conducted a similar study, but focused on Twitter instead of Facebook. While this current study focused on teacher perceptions instead of students', findings seem to support both Johnson's and Mazer et al.'s findings. Disclosing personal information online seemed to have a positive association with how students perceived their teachers, at least from the teachers' perspectives. Many teachers felt that their students were able to see different sides of them, which allowed them to more effectively reach out to students to build trust and demonstrate their desires to help their students succeed. Mazer et al. also conjectured that inconsistencies in self-disclosure and self-portrayal between online and offline arenas could negatively affect student perceptions; that is, if a teacher was relaxed in one arena and strict in the other, this could have adverse effects on how students perceived them. They further recommended "future research

might address the relationship between the instructor's self-disclosure on Facebook and their teaching style in the classroom to examine if inconsistencies have adverse effects on their credibility or on important student outcomes such as motivation and learning" (p. 180). Some teachers in this current study made it a point to separate their personas inside the classroom from their personas outside the classroom and on social media, being strict in one and relaxed in the others. They did not report any adverse effects on their own credibility or their students' learning, but instead explained that most of their students took the differences in stride. Thus, while this current study did not delve deeply into the effects of persona differences between online and offline arenas, it does somewhat expand on Mazer et al.'s findings by suggesting that persona differences would not have as negative an effect as speculated.

Both Lannutti and Strauman (2006) and Zhai (2012) found that instructor self-disclosure that was positive, honest, and intentional was associated with more positive evaluations from students. Evaluations were not a significant focus in this current study since most teachers taught at either the secondary level or at an A-level institution, and student evaluations of instructors are not typical metrics at those levels of education. However, most teachers did perceive encouraging reactions from students with whom they exchanged personal information over social media interactions, so it is possible that these students' evaluations of their teachers would have been positive. Both those previous studies also determined there was a dearth of research that examined self-disclosure and perceptions of instructors using real life contexts and experiences. Thus, this current study supplements and expands on those studies by similarly examining real life teacher experiences. In addition, Lannutti and Strauman and Zhai asserted that two commonly important aspects of self-disclosure in SPT, namely 'breadth' and 'depth', did not have any significant effects on student evaluations. In other words, student evaluations of their instructor in a classroom context did not seem to be affected by how much information the instructor self-disclosed or how personal that disclosure was. Lannutti and Strauman hypothesized that this is due to how personalistic or non-personalistic that self-disclosure is. That is, it seems to depend on whether the self-disclosure is done with one person (personalistic) or many (non-personalistic). Whereas both these previous studies focused on classroom contexts, this current study focused on contexts outside the class in online arenas. Online interactions between teacher and student are often visible to the larger groups and networks on whatever social media platform they are using, and are thus often non-personalistic. For example,

comments on a Facebook post or replies to a tweet on Twitter are visible to both parties' friends and followers on their public feeds. A message in a WhatsApp group is visible to all the other members of that group. However, many of these social media also have more direct instant messaging features and thus allow for more personalistic one-on-one interactions. Both parties can increase 'breadth' and 'depth' of self-disclosure as they see fit for the level and appropriateness of their current relationship and mode of interaction. Thus, the findings in this study allude to the possibility that teachers' personalistic one-on-one interactions with students on social media could contribute to more positive student perceptions of them. This conclusion adds to our understanding of the 'breadth' and 'depth' aspects of self-disclosure in SPT when examined in interpersonal relationships in academic contexts.

Overall, the findings in this study emphasize what Docan-Morgan and Manusov (2009) stated when they discussed the usage of a 'relational frame' for their study. They asserted that relationships are inherently systemic phenomena, and the aspects, factors, and elements in a relationship all influence one another. This was also suggested by Collins and Miller (1994), who stated that self-disclosure and liking within a relationship creates "feedback loops". The more information people disclose to one another, the more they like each other, and the more they like each other, the more they disclose. Thus, "rather than thinking of causality as operating in only one direction, we assume that variables have reciprocal effects on each other" (Collins & Miller, 1994, p. 470). As such, the usage of SPT to frame the relational aspects of this study situates the framework within the systemic and cyclical nature of the teacher-student relationship. Classroom dynamics, teacher-student interactions, and the interpersonal and academic aspects of the teacher-student relationship are all linked, and as they change over time, a shift in one will impact the others (Figure 14).

Implications for Practice

Overview

This study suggests that social media is a potentially powerful tool for educators, particular in out-of-class situations. It enables them to close the gap between them and students in both academic and interpersonal contexts. In terms of learning, using social media to maintain connections with students can allow the extension of learning outside the classroom, particularly in educational settings that are more teacher-centered and examination-oriented. In these

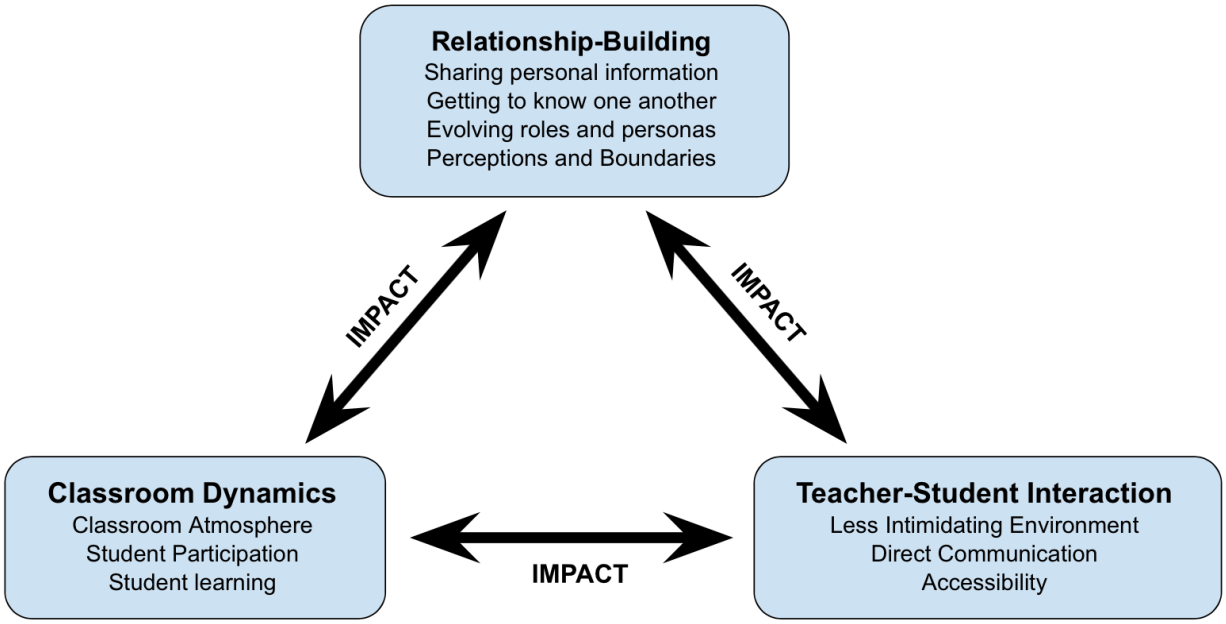

Figure 14. The Systemic Nature of the Teacher-Student Relationship

circumstances, social media allows the building of communities of practice where teachers can provide a more student-centered learning environment that might not always be possible or feasible given school policies, procedures, cultural expectations, and time constraints. As such, the findings in this study could serve to give educators an idea of which areas social media usage with students could prove most likely to be useful and advantageous. Moreover, this study suggests that social media is not simply the arena of the young and tech-savvy. In fact, these findings imply that because of their breadth and depth of experience, older educators can in some ways be more skilled at discerning how and when to use social media tools to best promote learning. Ultimately, this indicates that educators of all ages, fields, and skill levels can leverage the affordances of social media to better ensure that their students get the most out of their education, as well as shape teacher-student rapport and its ensuing effects.

Callaghan and Bower (2012) found that the usage of social media promoted self-directed learning, student motivation and engagement, and social rapport both online and in the classroom. However, their study also demonstrated the vital role of the teacher in all these positive associations. Social media in and of itself did not lead to positive learning outcomes; it was the teacher who determined the quality of relationships with students and how well social media promoted learning rather than simply social enhancements. Thus, while social media is

potentially an effective tool, educators need to ensure they use that tool efficiently with the ultimate goal of promoting meaningful learning. Likewise, it is also important to remember that insofar as social media affects how teachers and students connect on an interpersonal level, the aforementioned systemic nature of relationships means that as teachers and students develop their connections, other aspects of their relationships will inevitably be shaped. Although these aspects are all interconnected, the teacher is at the center of the equation and it is ultimately up to them to control where the relationship goes and how it develops.

Suggestions for Teachers

This study provided opportunities to gain real-world insights from Bruneian teachers about which social media they were using and the tools and techniques that worked for them in both academic and interpersonal arenas. As such, some ideas and suggestions can be proffered to teachers — particularly those in Brunei — considering social media as a teaching tool. The first step is to consider which social media students commonly use. Adopting a tool already familiar to students might ease any potential learning curve and lessen the effort needed to implement it. Next, teachers should consider which features of a social media tool can be effectively and appropriately used given their particular educational context. A few examples: a teacher looking to build a community of practice outside the confines of a classroom might consider a Facebook group an appropriate space in which to build a safe and flexible learning environment; and a subject that features numerous diagrams and graphics could benefit from Instagram as a supplementary tool and visual reference for students.

All the teachers in this study held up WhatsApp as a convenient and suitable tool that can be used by students, colleagues, and even parents. Given its features and flexibility, teachers can easily utilize it to connect directly with students, whether one-on-one through individual messages, or by creating group chats for each class or subject. WhatsApp's flexibility allows teachers to organize, tailor, and scale their usage, depending on what would be relevant to their educational needs. Its sheer ubiquity in Brunei also means that Bruneian teachers can easily implement it as a part of their teaching workflow and connect with students, parents, and colleagues.

Limitations

As with all research, there are limitations to this study. Research was conducted with teachers at multiple institutions in Brunei Darussalam. As such, given the specific site of this study, as well as the particular educational, cultural, and religious circumstances and beliefs of teachers, the applicability to other contexts outside Brunei would be challenging. Moreover, the small sample size in this study means that it would be difficult to adequately generalize its findings to larger populations, save for theoretical propositions; that is, it precludes statistical generalizations (Yin, 2014).

Also, since this study focused solely on teacher perspectives, it is unclear whether students would agree with or confirm their teachers' viewpoints. This is pertinent given that relationships are dyadic in nature and can be complex. Moreover, the teacher-student relationship does not exist in isolation and can be affected by the group dynamics inherent in a classroom. Thus, gaining a more complete and comprehensive understanding of the findings in this study is difficult without also considering student perceptions and how they could be colored by peer influences and group dynamics. Also inherent in the complexity of the relationships examined in this study is the difficulty in considering all the possible variables that could have affected findings.

Finally, given my personal connection to some teachers, as well as my own role as a teacher, there is potential researcher bias in my own perspectives and interpretation of the data (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies could delve deeper into this study by examining the significance of these impacts and how relational dynamics are being affected or changed, as well as how to best harness these dynamics to better increase teacher and student motivations, engagement, and possibly even achievement.

Future research could expand on this study by examining a larger sample of teachers to allow more applicable generalizations to the larger population of Brunei. Another study could be conducted to examine student perceptions of how social media is affecting their relationships with their teachers, and how they see their teachers' roles. Both sets of data can then be compared to further reinforce any findings, theories, or hypotheses that would emerge. Another

area for future research could involve how teachers use different kinds of social media with their students, and any impacts the differences between these tools could have.

In addition, it would be interesting to see the teacher-student relationship framed in the context of the current educational culture of Brunei. To that end, a possible future study could examine this from multiple angles. One way could be to re-examine Brunei through the lens of Hofstede's (2011) model, and see if Brunei's cultural profile has changed in the decades since and whether this is reflected in Bruneian classrooms. Another approach could be to examine teacher programs at local universities to see what is being taught to prospective teachers and compare it to the experiences of program graduates currently working in the field, in order to find out how well theory translates to practice and whether the educational culture in Brunei is still as teacher-centered as previous research has implied (Mundia, 2010; Salam & Shahrill, 2014; Shahrill & Clarke, 2014).

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the teacher-student relationship, and how social media interactions influenced how that relationship changed and progressed. It also examined any ways in which social media might be evolving the roles of educators. One major finding was that social media was perceived to positively affect the connection between teacher and student in myriad ways; it allowed teachers and students glimpses into one another's lives and allowed them to see one another as more than just their classroom labels. Their perceptions of one another changed as connections become more interpersonal. This meant that their roles as teachers evolved beyond the 'basic' function of educator; they became facilitators, counselors, coaches, mentors, parental proxies, and lifelong friends. Another major finding was that social media was also used as a tool to promote positive educational outcomes; as teachers spent time interacting with their students and building interpersonal relationships, they also worked towards the enhancement of academics and learning. Perhaps the most obvious finding to emerge is that the teacher-student relationship is complex, multi-faceted, and interconnected to other aspects and functions of the teacher's role. There is an inseparable interlinking of a teacher's educational function with any interpersonal roles they choose to take on. As such, enhancing one facet of their relationship with students will often naturally affect others.

This study adds to the existing literature considering the importance of the teacher-student relationship (Banfield et al., 2006; Bolkan & Goodboy, 2009; Frisby & Martin, 2010; Frymier & Houser, 2000; Gehlbach et al., 2012; Jones, 2008; Pogue & Ahyun, 2006). It offers insights into how social media affects the teacher-student relationship and enhances our understanding of how that affects classroom dynamics and out-of-class communication and support, in real life contexts as well as in online environments. It also grounds these insights in a cultural environment within the Southeast Asian context of Brunei, which has not seen much research in this area. As such, conclusions from this study lend themselves to analytic generalization (Yin, 2014) and enable the expansion, adaptation and evolution of educational and social media theories, particularly in Asian contexts.

Implications from this study involve how educators can leverage the strengths of social media to build interpersonal connections with students that contribute to both meaningful learning and meaningful relationships. At the end of the day, whether one regards social media as a benefit or distraction, a balm to ease the academic journey or a bane to be avoided, it is the teacher who is the driver of change in the relationship and who has the power to determine both its intensity and trajectory.

APPENDIX A: QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Introduction script: Good morning/afternoon. My name is Chester Keasberry. I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, pursuing a doctorate in Learning Design and Technology. The purpose of my project is to examine Bruneian teacher perspectives on how social media is affecting their relationships with students and their roles as teachers. While my focus is social media, I'm also interested in other forms of communication that may be important in your interactions with students.

Before we start, I would like to give you this consent form to read. This form has necessary information about my study and about your role and rights as a participant. Please read it carefully, and let me know if you have any questions.

[After form is read]: If everything is in order, please sign and date the form, and keep the first page for your records.

If at any point during the interview, if you feel uncomfortable with a question or would like to stop, please let me know.

Also, one thing to note before we start: during the interview I will be taking down notes, so you'll probably see me writing/typing here and there. Try not to be too distracted by this, as I am just writing down my own thoughts and notes to help me make sense of the data I'm collecting for the study.

Let's begin.

Background information questions:

[Ask participant to fill survey if they have not yet done so]:

First of all, I'd like to ask you to fill in this survey so I can get some background information about you and your social media usage.

1. Tell me about your teaching background.
    a. Prompt: How/why did you become a teacher?
2. Why do you use social media?
    a. Prompt: Tell me about why you like to use [social media name].

Teacher Role Questions

3. What does being a 'teacher' mean to you?
4. How have your perspectives on being a teacher changed or evolved since you started teaching up till now?
5. Think back on your own experience as a student with your own teachers. Now that you're on "the other side", as a teacher with your own students, I would like you to compare your experiences.
    a. What do you think is different? Prompt: How are teachers different? or students?
    b. Do you think social media has played a part in those differences? How so? [If needed, prompt to include their thoughts on their interactions with students]

6. Card Sort Task:

Question 1: Which of the following do you think are true of yourself in terms of your technology knowledge and uses? [give the cards]. Sort into those you think apply to yourself versus those you don't think apply.

Question 2: Which of the following do you think are true of the students you teach in terms of their technology knowledge and uses? Sort into those you think apply to your students versus those you don't think apply.

Question 3: Considering the two piles in front of you (your aspects vs your students' aspects), what impact, if any, does this have on your teaching?
Prompt: could be applied in a particular class or activity

Characteristics of digital natives* (on the cards)

- Craving for speed and inability to tolerate slow-paced environment
- Desire or perceived need to multitask
- Preference for pictures rather than text
- Tendency to process information in nonlinear ways
- Preference for collaboration
- Preference for constant connectivity
- Preference for learning through activity rather than reading or listening
- Mixing of work and play
- Expectation for immediate feedback and "payoff" for their efforts as found in games
- Preference for fantasy contexts as found in games and realistic TV and movies
- Expectation that technology is part of the landscape; difficulty with environments that lack technology
- Ability to scan text and process information quickly
- Loss of ability to read in linear manner
- Impatience with guided instruction
- Novelty of technology may be distracting

* Based on: Thompson, P. (2013). The digital natives as learners: Technology use patterns and approaches to learning. *Computers & Education, 65*(0), 12-33. doi: 10.1016/j.compedu.2012.12.022

7. How do your think your colleagues view your interactions with your students?

Teacher-Student Relationship Questions

8. What do you think a teacher-student relationship should be like?
    a. Do you think there are different identities that you have in school with other teachers vs your students? How are they different?
    b. What are the differences in the way you interact with current versus past students who you do not teach anymore?
    c. Do you think this is changing in today's digital world? How?
9. Think about your friends on the different social media platforms. What percentage of these friends are currently your students?
    a. Perhaps break down by social media?

10. Which social media do you use to interact with your students?
    a. Prompt: Which do you use most often?
    b. Prompt: How do these interactions occur/happen?
    c. Prompt: Are there other types of digital communication that you use to interact with them?
    d. Prompt: What do you think are the advantages of interacting on social media with your students?
11. Think about about your interactions with students on social media.
    a. Are they academic or non-academic?
    b. When you decided to start using social media, how did you start interacting with students?
    c. Who initiated the interactions?
    d. How did your students first react?
    e. Were there any who resisted connecting or interacting with you online?
    f. Could you describe how your relationships with your students have been changed through social media interactions?
    g. Are you friends in different ways beyond teacher-student?
    h. What sorts of boundaries do you have when it comes to online interactions with your students? Are there boundaries when it involves interactions with students of [the opposite gender]?
    i. I'd like to ask you about your interactions in different contexts. For example, how are they different in class versus out of class, how are they different within social media, versus outside of social media?
12. Think about your relationships with your students — on the one hand, there are those you interact with on social media, and on the other hand, those that you don't have much contact with on social media.
    a. Do you perceive these two groups differently? If so, how?
    b. How are your relationships between these students different?
    b. Prompt: Why do you think this is so? How do you feel the difference has come about?
    c. Prompt: Do you feel that this difference (if any) is due to social media?
    d. Prompt: Has this affected the dynamics in your classroom? How?
    e. Prompt: Has this affected your students' learning? How?
13. What are some lessons you have learned as a teacher who uses social media with your students?

APPENDIX B: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Which of these forms of digital communication have you ever used? (Select all that apply.)

☐ Texting (SMS/Whatsapp/etc.) ☐ Email ☐ Blogs

☐ Discussion Boards / Forums ☐ Facebook ☐ Twitter

☐ Vine ☐ Instagram ☐ Snapchat

☐ Other: _____ (Please specify)

2. On a scale of **0** to **5**, with **0** being '**NOT AT ALL**', and **5** being '**ALL THE TIME**', please circle how often you *currently* use the following forms of digital communication. Consider the following guidelines to help you choose:

Not at all = 0 times per month

Rarely = once a month or less

Sometimes = 2 to 3 times a month

Regularly = about once or twice a week

Often = three to six times a week

All the time = at least once a day

a. Texting (SMS/Whatsapp/etc.)

0	1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	**Regularly**	**Often**	**All the time**

b. Email

0	1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	**Regularly**	**Often**	**All the time**

c. Blogs

0	1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	**Regularly**	**Often**	**All the time**

d. Discussion Boards / Forums

0	1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	**Regularly**	**Often**	**All the time**

e. Facebook

0	1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	**Regularly**	**Often**	**All the time**

f. Twitter

0	1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	**Regularly**	**Often**	**All the time**

g. Vine

0	1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	**Regularly**	**Often**	**All the time**

h. Instagram

0	1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	**Regularly**	**Often**	**All the time**

i. Snapchat

0	1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	**Rarely**	**Sometimes**	**Regularly**	**Often**	**All the time**

3. On a scale of **0** to **4**, with **0** being '**NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT**', and **4** being '**EXTREMELY IMPORTANT**', please circle how important you rate social media for:

a. Keeping in touch with friends

0	1	2	3	4
Not at all important	**A little important**	**Moderately important**	**Very important**	**Extremely important**

b. Reconnecting with people I have lost touch with

0	1	2	3	4
Not at all important	**A little important**	**Moderately important**	**Very important**	**Extremely important**

c. Communicating with students about class work or projects

0	1	2	3	4
Not at all important	**A little important**	**Moderately important**	**Very important**	**Extremely important**

d. Interacting with students about non-academic related activities

0	1	2	3	4
Not at all important	**A little important**	**Moderately important**	**Very important**	**Extremely important**

e. Letting others know what is happening in my life

0	1	2	3	4
Not at all important	**A little important**	**Moderately important**	**Very important**	**Extremely important**

f. Keeping up with current events and activities

0	1	2	3	4
Not at all important	**A little important**	**Moderately important**	**Very important**	**Extremely important**

4. What do you believe are strengths for using digital communications for education?

5. What do you believe are challenges for using digital communications for education?

6. Feel free to describe any personal experiences you have had with using digital communications for education.

7. Approximately how many years have you been teaching? _____ years

8. How old are you? _____ years

9. Are you:
   ☐ Male ☐ Female

OPTIONAL: If you communicate or interact with your students on social media, you could potentially be a valuable participant for my research study. If you would agree to an interview, please leave your name, phone number and/or email address so that I may contact you. (Note: Any information you share will be kept strictly confidential.)

Name: _____

Phone no: _____

Email: _____

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